















**CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY**

**NOTES,**

**ON MANY PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE,**

**(OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHIEFLY),**

**WHICH TO COMMON READERS ARE HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD.**

**CONTAINING, ALSO,**

**AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE GENUINE BEAUTY AND  
FORCE OF SEVERAL OTHER PASSAGES.**

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**BY EZEKIEL J. CHAPMAN, A. M.**

**MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.**

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**SECOND EDITION,**

**WITH MANY ADDITIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS.**

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“So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”—Nehemiah viii, 8.

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NORTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW-YORK, *to wit* :—

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the fifteenth day of January, in the fifty-fifth year of the independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1831, EZEKIEL J. CHAPMAN, of the said district, has deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following; to wit :—

“Critical and explanatory Notes on many Passages of Scripture, (of the New Testament chiefly), which to common readers are hard to be understood. Containing, also, an Illustration of the genuine Beauty and Force of several other Passages. By Ezekiel J. Chapman, A. M. Minister of the Gospel.—Second edition, with many additions and improvements. ‘So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.’—Nehemiah viii, 8.”

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;” and also, to the act, entitled “An act supplementary to an act, entitled ‘An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned,’ and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints.”

RUTGER B. MILLER,

*Clerk of the Northern District of New-York.*

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## PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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It is acknowledged by Christians of every name, that there is no book so important as the Bible. This acknowledgment is grounded on the conviction they have, that the Bible is the word of God ; who, as they rightly judge, would never be concerned in making any communications to mankind, but what were both worthy of himself, and interesting to them. If the Bible be, as it professes to be, a revelation from Heaven, every attempt made for the illustration of its contents must, of course, be laudable ; and if made judiciously, cannot fail to be, in a greater or less degree, beneficial. Let no one conclude from the fact of the divine origin of the Bible, (a fact which is here taken for granted), that it needs no illustration ; that it must be already sufficiently plain and intelligible. The contrary to this would be the more reasonable inference. So far as such a revelation should relate directly to our own duty, and our own most important interests ; so far we might expect to find it plain, and easy to be understood, so that the way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein. And precisely of this character the Bible is found to be in this view. But a revelation from Heaven must be supposed to relate to other subjects than these, and subjects of far more difficult comprehension. Indeed, if the scriptures contained nothing but what we could easily and fully understand, it would rather be a presumptive evidence against their divine, and in favor of their mere human origin. For what man can fully comprehend, man might, for aught we know, have also originated. It is accordingly found to be a fact, and it is generally acknowledged, that the scriptures do contain some things

which are hard to be understood. This is expressly declared by St. Peter, in respect to the epistles of St. Paul; and it is equally true of many other parts of the sacred volume. To us, who live at a period so remote from that when the scriptures were written, the difficulty of understanding correctly and fully some parts of them, must be peculiarly great. Many things related in scripture—the parables, for instance, and many of the metaphors and illustrations there employed—refer to manners and customs prevalent among the Jews and the surrounding heathen nations, in that early age; and of course cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of those manners and customs, which were in many respects very different from ours. To understand correctly and fully such parts of the sacred volume, and to enter fully into the spirit of them, it is necessary that we should, as it were, forget our own times, and throw ourselves back into the early ages, two or three thousand years ago. It is for want of this preparatory knowledge—this knowledge of ancient and eastern manners and customs—that many things in scripture, which were perfectly familiar and intelligible to the Jews, are so unintelligible and so uninteresting to us. Besides, the scriptures were originally written in languages very different, as to their structure and idiom, from ours; and this circumstance ought to be remembered by all those who would correctly interpret them. In some instances, (few indeed, comparatively), where our English Bible presents no difficulty, we fail of perceiving the real “mind of the Spirit,” for want of a more correct translation. In such cases, the passages, as we have them, may not indeed be hard to be understood, but are liable to be *misunderstood*; that is, to be understood in a sense different from that which the Holy Ghost intended. In other cases, the difficulty attending a passage, as it stands in our version, would be removed by an acquaintance with the original language. It is an auspicious feature of the present age, that so much attention is paid to Jewish antiquities, and to sacred philology, especially in our theological seminaries. No human sciences are so indispensable as these are, to a correct interpretation of the word of God. Sound philology is of far greater use in this business than *philosophy*. The

province of the former is to ascertain what the scriptures *do* mean. The business of the latter frequently is to determine what they *should* mean, in order that they may support some preconceived sentiments, or some favorite system. Far be it from me to insinuate that the holy scriptures can ever be rightly interpreted, or even understood so as to make us wise unto salvation, without assistance superior to that which mere human learning, or human science of any kind, can give. No ; there must in both cases be *divine* illumination—the aids of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. ii, 11–14.) It would, however, be mere presumption in us, to expect that God will in this case, more than in others, work for us without the use of the appropriate means on our part.

But waving general remarks on this subject, I proceed to say a few things with more immediate reference to the work now offered for the second time to the public. The *object* I have in view in this work is not so much to instruct the learned, (though it is believed some parts of it will prove interesting and useful to them), as to furnish plain common people with a compendious exposition of such passages of scripture, as they are in the habit of proposing to ministers, and as many of them have proposed to me, for explanation. It is not enough, as it respects them, that such passages are explained by our best commentators and critics, so far as the light they had enabled them to give the explanation. Their works are in general so expensive, that many cannot purchase them. At the same time, they are, at least in many places, so rare as to be accessible only by a few. A *compendium* of judicious criticism, and of explanatory remarks on important difficult passages of the Bible, adapted to the understandings, and designed for the benefit of the common people, has long appeared to me as a desideratum in theology. Such a compendium I have endeavored to furnish. How successful I have been in the attempt, others qualified to judge must decide. In preparing the following work, I have had in view, also, the benefit of bible classes, and of Sabbath schools. Among all the books introduced into those youthful seminaries, I have never yet either seen or heard of any work like the present. And something of the kind, some convenient *manual* of sacred criticism, and



of explanatory remarks on the scriptures, certainly appears to be much needed by them. My concern (so far as exegesis is concerned) has been with such passages only, as appeared to me to *need* explanation, and these I have endeavored to explain as concisely as possible. To an intelligent and reflecting mind it will readily occur, that the preparation of a work of this kind must be attended with great and peculiar difficulties. I have found it to be so. On many of the difficult passages of scripture our best commentators themselves are not fully agreed. I can only say I have done what I could. It would be both tedious and needless to enumerate all the various and numerous authors whom I have consulted in reference to the following work, and with the view to render it as accurate as possible. Several of them are mentioned in the body of the work itself. Above all, I have diligently and prayerfully examined the holy scriptures themselves in their original languages, and have made considerable use of the Septuagint. What is here offered to the public is the fruit of much *thought*, as well as of much reading. I can truly say with Bishop Horne, in the preface to his Commentary on the Psalms, "Much labor hath here been bestowed, where little appears." The first edition of this work was well recommended by judges qualified to decide on its merits, and has proved useful to many. This second edition contains many corrections and improvements on the first, together with much additional matter; and will, it is hoped, be considered as far more valuable, and prove far more useful than that. No uninspired author is infallible; and it would be strange indeed, if the following work should be free from errors. It is believed, however, that whatever they may be, they are not such as can materially affect any important article of christian faith or practice. The work, such as it is, I now commend to God, the great source and patron of truth, with the earnest wish and prayer, that it may please Him to make it very useful to all who may have access to it, and who feel desirous to understand the scriptures.

E. J. CHAPMAN.

MANLIUS, N. Y. January 1, 1831.



## CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES, &c.

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### MATTHEW.

#### CHAPTER III, VERSE 12.

“He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

This prediction of John the Baptist alludes to the following practice of people in his days. Having winnowed the grain, and thus separated the chaff from the wheat, they set fire to the former on the windward side. The fire in that case had such an advantage over the chaff, that it would not cease until the chaff had been utterly consumed. Thus the fire was unquenchable. And thus figuratively and impressively does the Baptist represent the *worthlessness* of hypocrites, (for they in a moral sense are the chaff), and also their complete and eternal ruin. See Burder's Customs.

#### CHAP. V, 13.

“Ye are the salt of the earth.”

The use of material salt is two-fold—to *preserve* and to *season*. For the first of these purposes, we apply it to meats, and to those other substances that we wish to preserve from putrefaction; and for the latter purpose, it is daily placed on our tables, and is usually considered as an indispensable article for every family. In a sense correspondent to this two-fold use of material salt, true Christians, and christian ministers especially, may be called the salt of the earth; for when they act as such—act in character, and do not “lose their savor,” they are the means, the instrumental causes of *preserving* this guilty world from destruction. They prove the means of this by their prayers especially, as appears in the case of Moses praying for the Israelites, and in other

similar cases mentioned in the scriptures. At the same time, so far as they act in character, they become the means of *seasoning* the minds of their fellow men with grace and true wisdom. How desirable, then, in this view, is it, that their number should greatly increase !

#### VERSE 21.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill.”

The original may as well be translated thus:—It hath been said to the ancients, i. e. God hath said to the ancients, thou shalt not kill. The design of our Saviour in this verse, and in those other parts of this chapter where the same phraseology occurs, seems to have been, to remind the Jews of what the *Lord* had said of those precepts and prohibitions which the *Lord* had given to their fathers, as well as of those glosses, and erroneous or partial interpretations, which had been put upon them by their fathers and rabbis. At the same time, his design was to *explain* those precepts and prohibitions ; to illustrate their spiritual and comprehensive import, in opposition to what their blind guides had said.

#### VERSES 23, 24.

“Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

It is well known to be the practice of individuals in some of our churches, to absent themselves from communion at the Lord's table, because some others who approach that sacred ordinance have either injured them personally, or have in other respects acted in a manner unbecoming their christian profession ; and that these passages have been sometimes mentioned or referred to, in vindication of such a practice ; but surely without reason. For a moment's careful attention must convince us, that the direction before us respects not the *aggrieved* party, but the one who had *caused* grief. These words of Christ relate not to the one who had *received* the offence, but to the one who had given the offence. He (the latter, and not the former) is the one

who is to defer the offering of his gift ; or (as it may mean in reference to us Christians) the coming to the Lord's table, until he shall have become reconciled to his brother ; or at least until he shall have faithfully endeavored to become so, by making all reasonable acknowledgments and concessions, or explanations, as the case may require. No one has a right to stay away from the sacramental communion, and so disobey a plain command of Christ, (1 Cor. xi, 25), merely because *another has done wrong*.

#### VERSE 39.

"But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil ; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

The word *evil* in this passage denotes not the evil One, for him we are expressly commanded to resist, (James iv, 7) ; nor the evil thing or moral evil, viz. sin, for this we are commanded both to resist and to mortify ; but it denotes the evil *man*, the unreasonable and angry assailant. For proof of this, nothing more is necessary than a mere attention to the whole passage :—"I say unto you, that ye resist not (or rather not to resist) evil ; but *whosoever* shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

#### CHAP. VI, 30.

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith."

From Drs. Russell and Shaw, we learn, that on account of the extreme scarcity of fuel, the orientals use the dry stalks of herbs and flowers, of rosemary, and of various other plants, to make fire, and to heat their *ovens*. To common readers, casting grass or herbage into ovens, sounds strange ; but such, for the reason just mentioned, has long been the practice in Judea, and in the countries adjacent.

#### VERSE 34.

"Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow."

In the delivery of this precept, our Saviour did not design to prohibit, or discourage absolutely, all care and concern

about our future worldly condition, but merely to repress *solicitude* or *anxiety* about it; as must be evident both from the precise import of the original verb, which signifies to take *anxious* thought, and also from the fact that such absolute indifference would be altogether inconsistent with our performing, as we ought, our proper business in life, and even with our very subsistence.

#### CHAP. VII, 21.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.”

The Jews (says Thomas Hartwell Horne, in his Introduction to the Study of the Bible), “had a notion that all Jews would certainly be saved. Turretin brings a passage from the Codex Sanhedrim, which affirms that every Jew had a portion in the future world, and another from the Talmud, viz. that Abraham is sitting near the gates of hell, and does not permit any Israelite, however wicked he may be, to descend into hell. Now, in opposition to such traditions as these, Jesus Christ says—Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” But though our Saviour might have alluded primarily to such notions as these, we are not to suppose that this solemn declaration of his concerned the Jews *only*. It is as true of *us*, as it ever was of them, that not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Let us not satisfy ourselves with a mere profession, nor with any thing short of *doing* the will of our heavenly Father, remembering it is they only that *do* his commandments, that will have right to the tree of life, or that can enter in through the gates into the city. (Rev. xxii, 14.)

#### VERSE 23.

“I never knew you.”—Not that Christ never knew them as creatures, as men. The meaning is, he never knew them in the sense of *approbation*, i. e. he never approved of them. In this sense is the word repeatedly used in scripture, as in 1 Cor. viii, 3:—“But if any man love God, the same is known of him,” i. e. approved of him; and in Gal.

iv, 9 :—" But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God"—approved of God.

#### CHAP. VIII, 22.

" Let the dead bury their dead ;" i. e. let the spiritually dead, those dead in trespasses and sins, bury their dead. They are competent to that business ; they can perform all the necessary funeral rites for their departed friends. But thou hast other business—" Go thou, and preach the kingdom of God."

#### CHAP. VIII, 4.

" And Jesus saith unto him, see thou tell no man ; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them."

The gift here mentioned denotes the gift or offering of birds and lambs, as prescribed in Lev. xiv, 1—32, for the cleansed leper. These he was to offer in presence of the Jewish priest, whose official duty it was, to pronounce him in that case legally clean ; and all this was to be done " for a testimony unto them," i. e. the Jews, that the leper was legally cleansed. From the whole system of divine institutes relative to the plague of leprosy, and particularly from the extreme caution and diligence with which the priest was to proceed in his examination of the person suspected to be the subject of it, we may learn how careful and how faithful ecclesiastical judicatories should be, in examining and disciplining the members of the church, and especially those of them whose " spot is not the spot of God's children." For the loathsome disease of leprosy undoubtedly represents sin, the still more loathsome disease of the soul. Once more : From our Lord's particular direction to the healed leper, it is demonstrable, that the Jewish dispensation was not then abolished ; that, on the contrary, its ceremonial injunctions remained in undiminished force.

#### CHAP. XII, 5.

" Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless ?"

It is well known that under the Jewish economy, the pro-



fanation of the Sabbath was uniformly represented and universally considered as a very heinous sin. So heinous was it, that next to idolatry it seems to have been to the Jews the most procuring cause of divine judgments. How, then, could the profaners of that holy day have been pronounced, and by Christ himself too, as blameless? Or was there any thing in the character, circumstances, or official prerogatives of the priests, which allowed them to transgress, with impunity, an express command of Jehovah, and that, too, in the very sanctuary—in the sacred temple itself? Our Lord in this place evidently refers to those *sacrifices*, in the offering of which, the priests, by virtue of their office, were to be engaged. As if he had said, “Do not the priests on the Sabbath kill, flay, and burn the beasts devoted to sacrifice, and do other such like things, which, in a *common case*, and where divinely instituted worship was not at all concerned, would profane the Sabbath? And if they could, with impunity, thus violate the rest to be observed on the Sabbath, certainly a compassionate God, who requireth mercy and not sacrifice, or mercy before sacrifice, would not condemn, nor ought the Pharisees to condemn, a man, merely because to satisfy the cravings of hunger, he had plucked and eaten a few ears of corn on that day. “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”

#### VERSE 40.

“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

A serious difficulty seems to attend the last part of this verse, viz. in reconciling it with the account given by the Evangelists, respecting the time of our Lord’s continuance in the grave. On first view, there is certainly an apparent discordance between the prediction of the Master and the statements of the disciples. According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Christ was crucified on Friday at the ninth hour, or at three o’clock, P. M., as we reckon time; and all the Evangelists agree in stating, that he arose on the first day of the week, before the approach of day-light. How, then, could he have been three days and three nights in the heart

of the earth, or in the grave? Strictly speaking, he was there only eight or nine hours of the first day, the whole of the second day, and perhaps four or five hours of the third day. The embarrassment caused by this passage may be at once removed, by only attending to the chronological reckoning of the Jews. What that was, we may learn from a careful consideration of a few such passages as the following:—1 Kings, xx, 29. “And they pitched one over against the other seven days, and so it was that in the seventh day the battle was joined.” Esther iv, 16: “Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I, also, and my maidens, will fast likewise.” Compare this with chapter v, 1: “Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king’s house.” Luke ii, 21: “And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus.” Now the general remark, which the above texts and others like them manifestly suggest and justify, is this, viz:—*The Jews sometimes reckoned a part of a day for the whole day.* The truth of this appears from each of the above mentioned texts. In the first of them, seven days are mentioned; but it could not have been seven whole days, because on the seventh day “the battle was joined”—drew on, or came on. On that day, then, the encampment ceased, and actual engagement ensued. At what particular part of the seventh day, the fighting commenced, we are not informed; but any one acquainted with the usual practices of belligerents would conclude, of course, that it must have been some considerable time *before dark*. But still the encampment is said to have lasted seven days. In the second of these passages, we have Esther’s proposal or direction to Mordecai, to gather together the Jews, that they might fast for her three days, both night and day, neither eating nor drinking during the whole of that period; also, on account of her own resolution to subject herself to the same self-denying regimen. But it is said, “Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king’s house.” If, then, Esther executed her resolution, (which none, I believe, denies), she must

have fasted three days and three nights. But this, in the literal sense of the words, was impossible, because on the last of these days she put on her royal apparel, and appeared in the presence of king Ahasuerus, to see whether she might obtain favor in his sight : In plain English, she ceased fasting before the third day closed. Still, according to the Jewish reckoning, which frequently acknowledged a part of a day for the whole day, she might be said to have fasted three days. In the last of these passages, we are told that "when eight days were accomplished, for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus," i. e. he was circumcised with that name. But, surely, there could not have been an interim of eight whole days (each consisting of twenty-four hours) between the time of his birth and that of his circumcision ; for on the first of these days he was born, and on the last of them he was circumcised ; and it would be very absurd to suppose, that his birth took place the very first hour and first minute of the first day, and that his circumcision was put off until the very last hour and last minute of the eighth day. In strict accordance, however, to the idiom of the Hebrew, it might be said, "eight days were accomplished" between these two events. Enough has been said to show, that *according to the Jewish reckoning and phraseology*, Christ might, with propriety, be said to have been "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," or in the grave. I may add, that the Jews never brought any objection against Christ, to prove he was a false prophet, from these words of his, or from this his prediction respecting himself ; which they surely would have done, if the prediction itself had not been fulfilled ; that is, if he had not in fact lain three days and three nights in the grave, *according to their method of reckoning time*.

#### VERSES 43, 44.

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into mine house from whence I came out ; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished," &c.

From the expression in our English Bible, "*he walketh*"



through dry places, seeking rest," &c. many readers probably suppose, that the dispossessed man is here meant. But this is a mistake. It is not the man, but the unclean spirit, who is here figuratively represented as walking through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. One proof of this is, that in the original Greek, the participles rendered *seeking*, *having come*, are in the neuter gender, and must, of course, according to the rules of syntax, agree with the antecedent, πνεῦμα—spirit. By this parable, our Saviour meant to represent the moral state and final doom of the Jews, as a people. Having remarked that the evil spirit went, and took with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and thus fortified, re-entered his old habitation; He added, "even so shall it be also unto *this wicked generation*." As applied to them, it denoted that the hosts of hell and powers of darkness perceiving that they were unable to withstand the artillery of truth, as managed by John Baptist, Jesus Christ, and his apostles, would flee for safety to the Gentile nations, which had always been in the moral sense "dry places," having never yet been watered from "the river of God." There, however, they would be as unable to find rest as before. Nay, as the triumph of the gospel among the Gentiles would be both more decisive and more general than it had been among the Jews, the evil spirit would perceive himself to be in greater danger, and be more alarmed than before, and would therefore return with sevenfold rage and violence to his former possession, the Jewish nation; a prediction, which, with awful exactness, has been fulfilled upon that devoted people. The parable is also applicable to individuals, as such. And O, how many there are among ourselves, of whom it is but too just a representation; who hear the word of God, and are convinced of its truth, and of their own great wickedness and moral ruin, and become indeed partially reformed; so far, at least, that the evil spirit leaves them. They leave off and forsake their former wicked practices. But as they are not truly converted, as no *good* spirit enters into them, and they have "no root in themselves," their reformation, such as it is, proves of short duration: And how often, after the Holy Spirit has ceased to strive with them, do they become seven-

fold worse than they were before ! Reader, is this the case with you ? Pause, and think.

### CHAP. XIII, 30.

“ Let both grow together until the harvest ; and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them ; but gather the wheat into my barn.”

It is not my present design to explain particularly “ the parable of the tares of the field.” An infallible expositor hath already done this, as you may see by consulting that paragraph of this chapter which commences with the 36th, and ends with the 43d verse. One or two sentences, however, in our Lord’s exposition, it is to my present purpose here to insert, because they furnish an explanation, and of course a correct one, of several terms used in the passage before us, viz :—“ The *good seed* (i. e. the wheat) are the children of the kingdom, but the *tares* are the children of the wicked one ; the *harvest* is the end of the world, and the *reapers* are the angels.” We have, then, Christ’s authority for understanding the terms *tares* and *wheat*, as denoting saints and sinners, the righteous and the wicked. But why then, it may be asked, is it necessary to be so particular and so strict, as many ministers and ecclesiastical judicatories are, or at least profess to be, in regard to the moral qualifications of candidates for church-membership and communion ? For does not Christ here, in the person of the householder, direct that both sincere Christians and hypocrites be permitted to belong to his visible church, until the time of the general harvest, (or end of the world, verse 39), when, and not before, the separation is to be made ? In reply to this query, which appears at first very plausible, the following very important remark must be made, viz : that this direction has no reference to the *introduction* of persons into the church ; it does not specify, nor does it at all refer to the qualifications which persons must have, in order to *join* the church of Christ. On the contrary, it supposes, that by some means or other these persons are already *in* the church ; and the direction relates merely to the manner of treating them *after* they are there. Our Saviour in seve-

ral of his parables—as that of the ten virgins, that of the net cast into the sea, and in this of the tares—evidently supposes that hypocrites are, and will be, in his visible church. This He supposes, and takes for granted, merely as *a matter of fact*, without, however, expressing his approbation of it. On the contrary, He implicitly proclaims his disapprobation of it in declaring, that though *He* had sowed the good seed, the tares were sown by an *enemy, the devil*. The general import of the text now under consideration is, in brief, only this, viz :—that after the tares have in fact gotten in among the wheat, or hypocrites among the godly, it is too late, it is impossible, for the servants of the householder, for christian ministers, to make any thorough discrimination and separation between them. It has been remarked by such as were acquainted with the ancient tares, that in the first stages of their growth, they looked so much like the wheat, that it was nearly impossible for the most piercing human eye to distinguish the one from the other. The difference could not be fully seen until they had begun *to head* ; that is, a little before harvest. In like manner, hypocrites are frequently, in all outward respects, very similar to true Christians. For ministers, therefore, to attempt a thorough separation of the one from the other, would be not only in vain, a fruitless labor, but very dangerous also ; chiefly, because in rooting up the tares, they might root up the wheat also with them. But it is a solemn truth, that this separation will be made another day. Christ will then come with his fan in his hand, and will thoroughly purge his floor ; but the tares and the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire.

#### CHAP. XIV, 26.

“The disciples were troubled, saying, it is a spirit ;” that is, a spectre, an apparition, for the word in the Greek is not πνεῦμα, but φάντασμα.

#### CHAP. XVI, 18.

“And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter ; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

By the rock on which Christ’s church is built, must be intended either Christ himself, who in other places is called

a stone and a rock, (see Ps. cxviii, 22, compared with Mat. xxi, 42, and Isa. xxxii, 2), or that article of faith which Peter had just professed, viz. that Christ was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. But what is meant by the last clause of the verse, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?" In reply, it may be observed, that whenever any particular word or phrase is the *key* to any passage of scripture; that is, whenever any such word or phrase can of itself open and discover the true meaning of any such passage, (as is sometimes the case, and seems to be so here); it of course becomes necessary to investigate the import of that word or phrase, as used in other passages. No difficulty attends this sentence, but what arises from the phrase, "gates of hell," πύλαι ᾗδου. If, therefore, we can ascertain the import of these words, we may perceive at once the import of the sentence itself. As to the word here translated *hell*, see a more particular explanation than can be here given, in my notes on Acts ii, 27. It denotes, generally, the invisible state of the dead, the region of departed spirits. Sometimes, it means the grave; and such seems to be its most proper meaning in this place. A gate is that which opens to a way, and afterwards leads to some place. So the gates of the grave, or of death, are such things as lead to the grave, or death and destruction, such as sickness, diseases, and various calamities. This same phrase is used in another place, (Isa. xxxviii, 10), where Hezekiah says, "I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years." The words used in the Septuagint, and which are an exact translation from the Hebrew, are πύλαις ᾗδου. Now, what Hezekiah meant by his going to the gates of the grave was, that he should *not live*, but *die*, as appears from his words immediately following, viz:—"I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living. I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world." And this phrase, as used in a moral sense, or figuratively, seems to denote moral diseases, such as errors, sins, &c. None of these, nor all the powers of darkness, shall ever destroy the church of Christ. In a word, the meaning of the passage



before us is, that this church shall never die, never be destroyed; but shall always live, and shall finally triumph, in spite of all its enemies.

#### CHAP. XVIII, 6.

“Whosoever, therefore, shall offend one of these little ones, that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hung about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

The first and most common meaning of the word offend is, to *irritate*, to *make angry*. But the original word here used signifies, to *cause one to fall* into sin, by laying a stumbling block before him. The expression of hanging a mill-stone about one's neck, and thus drowning him in the midst of the sea, alludes to a mode of punishment sometimes used among the ancients. But our Saviour did not mean, that of even a more tremendous punishment than this, a person should be worthy, merely because he should happen to *displease* one of his disciples. Christ himself sometimes displeased, and in this sense *offended* his disciples, by telling them unwelcome truths. (See Mat. xvi, 21—23, and John vi, 65, 66.) The apostle Paul displeased the Christians of Galatia, and so much so as to become their *enemy*, by telling them the truth, (ch. iv, 16.) If, indeed, Christians were perfectly as they ought to be; if they were wholly renewed in the spirit of their mind, God's holy truth would never displease them; and there would be no danger of our displeasing them, by saying or doing any thing which is included within the limits of christian duty. But Christians being as they are, but partly sanctified, it is far otherwise; and it may be our duty sometimes to say and do such things to them, as may displease and irritate them, though, undoubtedly, such things should be said and done in as inoffensive a *manner* as possible. Our Saviour's denunciation in the text before us, is manifestly levelled only against such as should, whether by persecution, or flattery, or in any other way, become designedly or willingly the instruments of the apostacy and final ruin of his followers.

## VERSE 34.

“And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, (i. e. prison-keepers), till he should pay all that was due.”

The prisons of the ancients, according to Harmer, were very different from ours. Their prison was a part of a private house, and commonly of the house where their criminal judges dwelt. Hence, then, we have the illustration of Jer. xxxvii, 15—“Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the *house* of Jonathan the scribe.” Another fact relative to the prisons of the ancient orientals was, that the keepers of them had, to a lamentable degree, the power of treating the prisoners according to their pleasure. The injunction on them was not so much to treat the prisoners humanely, as to *keep them safely*. (Acts xvi, 23.) They might indulge them with privileges, or put them in irons, or throw them into the dungeon, and use them with a severity which christianity would forbid; and which, had its genuine spirit and power prevailed among them, it would have prevented. Hence, then, the force of this passage, “delivered him to the tormentors.” Hence the force of Jeremiah’s request that he might not be carried back to the dungeon, lest he should *die*. Hence the energy of those scriptures which speak of the “*sighing* of the prisoner;” and what a terrible emblem is there here of the future misery of the finally impenitent! What reason for gratitude have we, that prisoners in our days are treated so much more humanely than they were in ancient times, and among the heathen! In this respect, as in innumerable others, we may say—“See what hath christianity done.”

## CHAP. XIX, 24.

“And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

Some, in attempting to explain this text, have supposed that the original word here used, might as well have been translated a *cable*, or a cable-rope. But though the imagery might appear the most natural, or less unnatural, with that translation, there still remains an insurmountable ob-

jection to it, which is, that the word κάμελος, signifies properly a camel, and not a cable-rope. See Schleusner on the word. Besides, what relief can the mind obtain, by substituting cable-rope for camel? It is as *really* impossible that a cable-rope should pass through a needle's eye, as it is that a camel should. I would here insert the interpretation given of this scripture by Harmer, which, whether satisfactory or not, must be allowed to be ingenious. It is to this purpose: "The Arabs have long been accustomed to ride into houses for plunder, &c. Hence, and to prevent this, the people made the doors of their houses low, about three feet in height. Their camels, also, the predatory Arabs had caused to enter houses, by making them first kneel down upon their knees." Now, to this custom, Harmer thinks Christ refers in this passage. As if he had said, it is easier for a camel to enter a house through a very narrow passage, one, as it were, like the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to be saved. On this construction the comparison is not quite so unnatural, as to the unlearned reader it now appears. Perhaps, however, it is sufficient, if, with Schleusner and Rosenmuller, and other good expositors, we understand this declaration of Christ as only a *proverb*—a proverbial expression, sometimes used by the Jews, when they would express either an absolute impossibility, or a very great difficulty. Before leaving this passage, however, I would just mention *what sort* of rich men our Saviour here meant. His own words, as cited by Mark, ch. x, 24, will clearly show. "Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them—Children, how hard is it for them that *trust* in riches to enter into the kingdom of God." It hence appears, that there is not, in the nature of the case, any absolute impossibility of a rich man's being saved, as Mat. xix, 24, separately considered, would seem to teach. And we know from facts, that this is not in the nature of things impossible; for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and David and Job, who were rich in this world's goods, were rich in faith, also; and they are now heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him. And surely no rich man will be damned of course, and because he is rich, any more than a poor man will be saved of course, and because he is poor.

It cannot be denied, that there is a peculiar and a very great difficulty in the way of a rich man's being saved ; and this seems to be the whole of what our Lord intended in the passage to which we are now attending. If he enters into the kingdom of God, it will be "so as by fire." But the difficulty arises, not so much from riches themselves, as from the nature of the human heart, which is so much attached to earthly treasures, and so much inclined to "trust in uncertain riches," to make them an idol—a god. And by comparing these two passages together, we see it is only those rich men that so do, that shall be finally excluded from the kingdom of God. How important, by the way, is it to compare scripture with scripture—one passage or paragraph with another that relates to the same point, in order that we may rightly understand the word of God !

#### VERSE 28.

"Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The meaning of this text will be essentially affected by the punctuation we may adopt. If we adopt that used in Griesbach's edition of the Greek-Testament, which is approved by Scott, and which probably is the most correct one, it would appear that the *παλιγγενεσία*, the regeneration here mentioned, is to be understood as referring not to Christ's disciples, and so denoting that moral change—that change of heart which they had experienced, but to the day when the Son of Man should sit upon the throne of his glory ; in other words, that regeneration, in this place, denotes that great change in the moral world which will be effectuated at the day of judgment, when there shall be made a new heaven and a new earth ; that, in short, the meaning is, as if Christ had said, "Ye who have followed me in this world, shall, on the great day—that day of the *restitution of all things*, (Acts iii, 21), and of moral regeneration, sit upon twelve thrones," &c. But to conclude hence, as it appears some have done, that personal regeneration (meaning thereby the renovation of the heart by the Holy Spirit) does not take place in this



world, nor until death, or the day of judgment, is extremely absurd.

CHAP. XX, 23.

“But to sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.”

The sentence “it shall be given to them,” is inserted by our translators, and there is nothing answering to it in the original. This interpolation, designed, no doubt, to illustrate, appears greatly to obscure, or rather to misrepresent our Saviour’s meaning. As the passage now stands, the word *mine* seems to be emphatical; and common readers would from the whole infer, that the privilege of sitting at Christ’s right hand in his kingdom, *he* had no power to give to any; that, however, it should be given (say by his Father) to them for whom it was prepared. But leave out the interpolation, and the *true* meaning of the passage is perfectly plain; thus, “To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but (or except to them) for whom it is prepared of my Father.” The restriction implied in the words relates not at all to the power of Christ, but simply to the *number* of those to whom it was consistent or proper that the privilege or prerogative in question should be given. This passage, therefore, when rightly understood, does not at all contradict, but rather supports the doctrine of our Saviour’s divinity.

CHAP. XXII, 28—33.

“Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

If regard be had merely to the etymology of the word *ἀναστᾱσις*, it must be allowed that it is rightly rendered in English, resurrection. In the verses now before us, it

seems, however, to denote that state of being which is to *succeed* the resurrection of the body, and which is commonly called the *separate* state. For, observe the argument. Our Saviour introduced the declaration of Jehovah to Moses, (Exodus iii, 3, 6), as a proof and as an instance of the *ἀναστᾱσις*. But surely, from the state of those patriarchs, as it was in Moses' time, it could never be proved that the dead bodies of men will rise again. For those patriarchs had not risen again ; and of course their case was neither an instance nor a proof of the literal resurrection. But it was both a proof and an instance of a state of conscious existence after death. In a word, from this declaration of Jehovah to Moses, "I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," a declaration made four hundred years after their death, the logical inference is simply and solely this, viz : that those patriarchs, that is, their souls, were *then alive* ; for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. The conclusion then is, that the verses before us are a direct and decisive proof of a separate and a future state, but not of a corporeal resurrection, otherwise than by implication and inference.

#### CHAP. XXIII, 5.

"They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments."

The Greek word translated phylacteries, is derived from *φυλάσσω*, to keep, to preserve ; and as here used it denotes those scrips of parchment which the Jews wore on their foreheads, or on some conspicuous part of their garments, and on which were written and *preserved* some select and favorite sentences of their law. This practice was in conformity to the precept in Deut. vi, 7—9, which they understood in the literal sense.

#### VERSE 27.

"Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

The following remarks from Robinson's Greek Lexicon, may serve to illustrate this passage, viz :—"The sepulchres of the Hebrews, at least of the wealthier part of them, were usually spacious caverns ; either natural, of which many

were found in Palestine, or hewn by art out of rocks, or in the sides of mountains. (See Gen. xxiii, 9: Matt. xxvii, 60.) The roofs of these sepulchres were supported by columns, and they often contained different apartments, around the sides of which were cells for the reception of the bodies. The mouths of the caverns were closed by doors, or large stones, to prevent the dogs and jackalls from entering; and in order to give notice to those who might pass by, and thus prevent them from becoming defiled, by inadvertently touching a sepulchre, the external parts were annually white-washed in the month Adar."

#### CHAP. XXIV, 15.

"When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place," &c.

By this expression is intended generally the Roman army, which emphatically made desolate by its conquests and ravages. It was called the *abomination* of desolation, on account of those images of their idols which were engraven on their standards, and which were extremely abominable to the Jews—abominable, both because they were the *images* of deities, which images the Jews were by the second commandment expressly prohibited from either worshipping or making; and because they were the images of *such* detestable deities or idols as the Romans worshipped.

#### VERSE 17.

"Let him which is on the house top, not come down, to take any thing out of his house."

To understand this passage, it must be remembered that the houses of the Jews had flat or horizontal roofs. Hence we read of David's "walking upon the roof of his house." (2 Sam. xi. 2.) The meaning of our Saviour evidently was, that those Jews who should happen to be on the roofs of their houses, (whether for recreation or devotion), when the Roman armies appeared before Jerusalem, should entirely disregard every thing in the house, however valuable, and if they meant to save their lives, go immediately down at the outer stairs, and thus flee out of the city.

## CHAP. XXIV, 28.

“For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

This remark is undoubtedly true in the literal sense. To a dead, mouldering, putrefying body, not only eagles, but other winged animals, spontaneously resort, (Gen. xv, 11.) It is, however, sufficiently evident that our Lord intended that the remark should be understood in some other than the literal sense. For from the parallel place in Luke xvii, 37, it appears it was in answer to the disciples' inquiry, “Where Lord?” i. e. where shall these predicted calamities be experienced? To this inquiry, Christ gave no other reply than this—“Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” By the carcase, therefore, must be meant the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who as a people were morally and judicially dead; and by the eagles, the Roman armies, which might properly be called by this name, both on account of the *rapidity* of their marches, and because they had the sign of the *eagle* on their standards.

## VERSE 41.

“Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

To a mere English reader, and to any one not acquainted with ancient manners and customs, this prediction of Christ appears strange and almost unintelligible. For the satisfaction of such readers it should be observed, that the ancient mills, and the ancient method of grinding corn, were very different from ours. Their mills were hand-mills, and were managed by women. (See Ex. xi, 5.) The orientals have preserved mills of the same sort, and the same method of grinding, down to the present time. Dr. Clarke, in his late travels through Palestine, observed the same practice at Nazareth. Two women sat on the ground opposite to each other, with two round flatted stones. On the top of the upper one was an opening, or hollow place, where the corn was put in, as it now is into the hoppers of our grist-mills. These stones or stone-mills were turned, it seems, with a sort of crank, and were sometimes pushed from one to the other. In this manner they ground daily. This business is

usually done in the morning, so that if any one then walks out, he will hear the noise of many of these mills at the same time. At a time when grist-mills were not in use as they are now, and when the usual method of grinding corn was by these hand-mills, one of them must of course have been considered as essential to every family; and to have been deprived of them must have been a great calamity. There is more meaning, therefore, than most readers imagine, in that threat which the Lord gave, in Jer. xxv, 10—"Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness; the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; the sound of the *mill-stones*, and the light of the candle."

#### CHAP. XXV, 36.

"——Sick, and ye visited me."

The original word here used signifies a looking after, overseeing, taking care of, &c. In Acts vi, 3, the same word is rendered "look out." It is only for *such* a visiting of the sick, that the final benediction of the Saviour, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," &c. will be pronounced. "Let him that readeth understand."

#### CHAP. XXVIII, 19.

"Go ye, therefore, and teach (or disciple) all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

When the preposition *εἰς* governs an accusative, (as it does here), it is very frequently rendered *into*. Thus it *may* be rendered, and thus many eminent divines do render it, in this place—"into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." There is some difference in the meaning of these expressions. To baptise *in* the name of the adorable THREE, means to baptise by their authority. To baptise *into* their name, means to initiate one, so far as any external rite can do it, into that religion which they, in fulfilment of their eternal, federal, and mutual engagements, have established and continued on earth. It denotes, also, an introduction of one into the visible church.



## MARK.

## CHAPTER II, VERSE 18.

“And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast; and they come and say unto him, why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?”

My only object in introducing this scripture, is to show what is included, or at least one thing that is included, in fasting. That one thing now referred to, is *abstinence from food*. Indeed, this is believed generally, though not universally. Some there are who believe that abstinence from food is not necessary to fasting. Now, such persons seem to confound the act itself with the object or end of the act; and this is, probably, the cause of their error respecting this matter. The end of fasting is, doubtless, the mortification of sin, (see Isa. lviii, 6); and the only, or certainly the chief reason, why it is valuable or desirable at all, is derived from its tendency to accomplish that end. But the act itself of fasting is a different thing. And that this includes abstinence from food appears—1st, from the original Greek word, νηστεύω, here used; which, according to Schleusner and Parkhurst, properly denotes such abstinence; and, 2dly, from the parallel scripture in Luke v, 33, where we read—“And they said unto him, why do the disciples of John fast often, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?” Here fasting is directly opposed to eating and drinking, and eating and drinking to fasting. From these two passages taken in connection, it is perfectly plain, that the eating and drinking mentioned in the one is the same with the *fasting not* mentioned in the other.—How often persons should fast, and how long this exercise should be continued, must be determined by circumstances; only let it be remembered, no one *fasts*, strictly speaking, any longer or any further than he abstains from food and all animal nourishment. In conclusion, I would remark, it is very lamentable that this exercise should be so generally neglected as it appears to be in our days. For that it is sometimes a duty, the holy scriptures clearly teach, (see Mat. iv, 16—19, and 1 Cor. vii, 5); and that for spiritual purposes it is a blessed privilege, the experience of those who have made the trial proves.

## CHAP. III, 14.

“And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.”

There are three Greek words which are translated *preach*, viz: κηρύσσω, καταγγελλω, ευαγγελίζω. Those who can read the New Testament in its original language, may perceive, both from the etymology of the words themselves, and from an examination of those passages wherein they occur, that all these words are not perfectly synonymous. The first and second, it is true, are nearly so; but between the first and the last there is a wide difference. And it appears in that—

1. Κηρύσσω (to publish, to proclaim as an herald or public crier) may have for its object any thing good or bad, desirable or undesirable, as war or peace, prosperity or adversity, joy or sorrow; but the object of ευαγγελίζω is always something *good* and agreeable.

2. The former, as is evident from the very import of the word, supposes a large, or at least a considerable number present. But not so necessarily with the latter. The glad tidings may be declared to only *one*. (See Luke i, 19), “I—Gabriel—am sent to speak unto thee, and to show *thee* these glad tidings.”

## CHAP. VI, 12.

“And they went out, and preached that men should repent.”

There are two words in the original translated repent—μετανοέω and μεταμέλομαι. But these are not wholly synonymous. The former, which is the word used when the scriptures require repentance as a duty, or represent it as necessary, signifies exactly a change of the mind, and such a change as includes commonly a *godly* sorrow for sin, and external reformation. (See among other instances of this use of the word, Acts ii, 38—iii, 19—xvii, 30: Luke xiii, 3, 5.) But the latter may denote *mere* repentance, *mere* sorrow. Accordingly, we find, that when such a sorrow is mentioned, as is emphatically the sorrow of the world, that worketh death—such a sorrow as has for its object the evil consequences of sin, rather than the odious nature of sin itself, the word used is commonly μεταμέλομαι. At any rate,

there is some difference in the meaning of these two words ; and the above remarks may be highly useful to the reader, particularly in enabling him to understand what the scriptures mean, when, as is sometimes the case, they ascribe repentance to *really* impenitent sinners, as to Judas. (Mat. xxvii, 3.) Let the reader who is desirous of further satisfaction on the two texts last commented upon, consult Dr. Campbell's Preliminary Dissertations.

#### CHAP. IX, 49.

“For every one shall be salted with fire ; and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.”

What could our Saviour have intended by the first part of this verse—“every one shall be salted with fire?” It is evident there is here a reference to the precepts of the Mosaic law, relative to those oblations which were required under the former dispensation. (See particularly Lev. ii, 13 :) “And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with *salt* ; neither shalt thou suffer the *salt* of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat-offering ; with all thine offerings thou shalt offer *salt*.” But the question is, whether the text now before us is to be understood as a promise or as a threat ; or whether, if considered as a prediction, it is to be understood as a prediction of the happy state of the righteous, or of the miserable state of the wicked ; whether, with Macknight, Parkhurst, and some others, we are to understand  $\pi\upsilon\rho\iota$ , fire, as in the dative case, and accordingly to interpret the passage thus :—“Every (redeemed) one shall be salted for the fire of God's altar, and so shall be offered as an holy and acceptable sacrifice,” (Rom. xii, 1) ; or whether, with Henry, Doddridge, Scott, Schleusner, and most of the best commentators, we are to understand the passage as a *denunciation* against the wicked, and accordingly to mean thus, or on this wise, viz :—“As every Jewish oblation was to be salted, sprinkled with salt, in order that among other purposes, it might be the more readily and completely consumed by fire ; so, and in allusion to that custom, every damned soul shall be salted, and thus be prepared to undergo the fire of God's wrath.” The last seems, on the whole, the best interpretation, and is most



generally approved. Let it be remembered, however, that the analogy here implied between the Jewish sacrifices or oblations, which, or some of which, were to be *utterly consumed by fire*, and the case of the finally impenitent, does not prove that the latter are to be literally *consumed* or *annihilated*, any more than the scripture application to them of the terms *perish*, *be destroyed*, &c. does. All the destruction intended by such terms or phrases, as applied to the wicked in a future state, is a destruction of enjoyment, of hope, and of all prospect of good—not of rational existence.

#### CHAP. XI, 13, 14.

“And seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon; and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, no man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever;” with Mat. xxi, 19; “and presently the fig-tree withered away.”

The attentive reader naturally inquires, why should Jesus curse the fig-tree for its barrenness, when, as appears from the passage itself, the time of figs, or of its bearing figs, had not yet come? For, “shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” And could it have been right or reasonable for Him to expect and demand fruit from the fig-tree, when, from the very nature of the case, fruit was impossible; and finally, to condemn the tree to perpetual sterility, merely because it did not do that which it was impossible for it *then* to do? With this passage expositors have been much perplexed. Some of them have supposed, that the fig-tree in question was of a peculiar kind, of that kind which bore at the same time figs of two years’ growth—figs of the present year and of the past. And hence they conclude, that even if it were too early for figs of the present year to have been there, still, as it was usual for such fig-trees to have some fruit upon them all the year round, some figs at least of the preceding year might have been reasonably expected. Others have supposed, that for the correct explanation of this passage, the word *gathering* ought to be understood—thus:—“When he came to it he found nothing but leaves; for the time of *gathering* figs was not yet.” When the Jews said, “There

are yet four months, and then cometh harvest," (John iv, 35), they meant by the harvest, the *ingathering* of the harvest. In like manner, it is said, may the passage before us be understood. And as the time of gathering figs, and carrying them off, had not yet come, so, and for this reason, Jesus might properly have expected to find them still on the tree. But there is another interpretation of this passage, far more simple, and, I think, far more satisfactory, than either of the preceding. It should be remembered that the word *yet* is inserted by our translators. There is nothing corresponding to it in the original, which may just as well be translated thus:—"It was not a time of figs;" that is, there were no figs there; the tree was barren; it did not bear figs that season. According to this interpretation or translation, the two last clauses in verse 13 are indeed synonymous; but this is only in conformity to the well known idiom of the sacred languages. The above solution being adopted, (and it is surely an allowable one), we are entirely relieved from embarrassment in accounting for Jesus' cursing the fig-tree. For it would hence appear, that the simple reason why Jesus cursed the fig-tree was its *barrenness*. The tree, it is true, had leaves in plenty, but that was all. It was not with it a time or season of bearing figs. Though it had leaves, and therefore must have been *alive*, and capable of bearing fruit, yet it was utterly barren that year. Hence our Lord cursed it, and it withered away. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." The barren fig-tree was an apt emblem of the Jewish nation, which, like that tree, had leaves in plenty. It had made a good profession. To the eye of sense, and at a distance, it looked green and fair, and seemed to promise much "goodly fruit." But on a nearer approach, and a more accurate view, all these appearances were found to be deceptive; so that the Lord Jesus might properly say, in application to them, "Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none." In the curse which Christ pronounced on the fig-tree, and in the ruin which followed, we behold an emblem of the Lord's dealings with that incorrigible people. But all this was for

our admonition also. "Let ours, then, learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful," lest we also should meet with a similar doom. "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not *thee*."

#### CHAP. XIII, 11.

"But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought before hand what ye shall speak; neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."

How have enthusiasts wrested this scripture, and, it is to be feared, to the destruction of many! It has been frequently used to disprove the necessity of study in christian ministers; to prove that they ought not to premeditate on their subjects; that they should not give themselves the trouble of determining or even thinking before hand what or how they shall preach; but must expect and depend upon a certain inspiration, or immediate divine assistance, to be imparted at the moment they enter the pulpit or place of preaching, and to be continued so long as they are there!! The true, the whole meaning of this passage, may be easily understood, by comparing it with the parallel one in Mat. x, 17—20—"But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues: And ye shall be brought before *governors* and *kings* for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." A moment's attention to this passage in Mark, as illustrated by the one in Matthew, must convince any candid, unprejudiced mind, that the former relates solely to that *defence of the gospel and of themselves*, which the apostles were to make before the Jewish sanhedrim and Gentile tribunals. Our Lord here directed his apostles, that when arraigned, or about to be arraigned, before those bodies, on trial for their lives, they should not be anxious in respect to self-vindication, assuring them, that ability sufficient for this purpose would be immediately imparted to them from on high. This scripture, therefore, is

of no force at all, to support the groundless, false, and highly dangerous sentiment, that ministers in these days, may, in ordinary cases, preach without study and previous preparation ; a sentiment embraced of course by none but the ignorant.

#### CHAP. XV, 23.

“ And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh ; but he received it not ;” i. e. wine rendered bitter by myrrh and other substances.

It was the custom in those days, to give this potion or cordial to condemned prisoners, to stupify them, and thus to render them less susceptible to pain. This was done, probably out of mere compassion to the sufferers. But as Jesus had undertaken, and was resolved to suffer *to the full extent* which was necessary, in order that he might be a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, so that God might consistently be just, and the justifier of him that believeth ; and as his sufferings could not have availed for this purpose, if there had been any *mitigation* of them from the proffered cordial—for this reason he rejected it.

### LUKE.

#### CHAP. II, VERSE 1.

“ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.”

“ All the world”—But certainly this phrase can denote at most only the Roman empire ; for beyond that the jurisdiction of Augustus Cæsar could not extend. In this text, therefore, (and in many others also), the word *all* is clearly used in a limited sense. Let the Universalist remember this—“ should be taxed,” or registered, enrolled. By the laws of the Roman empire, all its subjects were required to profess their citizenship, and to give in their names, which were to be registered and preserved in the archives of the empire. This, it seems, was to be done for two purposes ; that thereby an accurate census might be taken of the number of inhabitants, and that the business of taxation might

be adjusted. And in order to this, it was necessary that each one should go to the place of his nativity, or that of his stated residence. Accordingly, it is said, verse 3, "And they all went to be taxed, (or enrolled, as the word properly signifies), every one *into his own city.*"

#### VERSES 8—12.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them—Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

*This day*, here mentioned, is supposed to have been the 25th day of the month which we call December. The same day, accordingly, has been and still is usually denominated *Christmas* day, in commemoration of the birth of Christ. It should be remembered, however, (as Mosheim observes), that the ancient eastern nations celebrated the sixth of January as the day of the incarnation. That day they called Epiphany, from the Greek word *Ἐπιφάνεια*, signifying manifestation, because on that day, as they supposed, the immortal Saviour was manifested to the world. The interim between these two dates is short—only twelve days; so that still, by the concurrent voice of both ancient and modern Christians, Jesus Christ was born about the last of December or first of January. But how, the unlearned reader of our climate may inquire, could this be? Could shepherds be *then* abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks, and by night too? The difficulty relative to this subject will vanish, when he recollects or understands the latitude of Judea. This is about thirty-one degrees. No valid objection, therefore, to the commonly received opinion relative to the time of our Lord's incarnation, can arise from the fact of the above mentioned contemporary employment of the shepherds. For in that latitude and warm climate, shepherds might have been very comfortable on the 25th of December, or the 6th of January, while out in the open fields at-



tending to their flocks. This seems to be the proper place for raising a decided testimony against the manner in which Christmas day is very frequently spent. He that regardeth the day at all in distinction from other days, should surely regard it unto the Lord. Some undoubtedly do thus regard it; but how many there are who spend the day in vain amusement, or at best in mere conviviality, and without scarcely a thought of that glorious event which was announced by the angels to the shepherds!!

#### CHAP. IV, 20.

“And when he had closed the book, he gave it to the minister and sat down.”

The word translated minister, in this verse, denotes not what in these days is commonly intended by the term, i. e. a christian pastor, but a *menial servant*, whose business it was to take charge of the sacred books. The same word occurs, and is similarly translated, in Acts xiii, 5.

#### CHAP. V, 37, 38.

“And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved.”

For the information of common readers, and for the explanation of these passages, it should be remembered that the *bottles* of the ancients were very different from ours. They were made of leather, or rather of the skins of animals. And if these leather or skin bottles were new and strong, they might preserve in safety the new wine put into them; but if they happened to be old and decaying, the new wine, still in a state of fermentation, would burst the bottles; and thus, both would the former be wasted, and the latter utterly destroyed. No man, therefore, of any sense, would put new wine into old bottles. Thus much for the *literal* meaning of these verses. From the connection, it is evident that the *spiritual* meaning of our Saviour was, that it would be wholly improper and injurious to impose on his disciples, as yet weak and but little experienced in the divine life, such severe mortifications and rigorous observances as John's

disciples practised, in conformity to the directions and the example of their master.

#### CHAP. VI, 1.

“And it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn-fields.”

The only difficulty attending this passage is found in the expression, “the second Sabbath after the first.” What Sabbath was that? The following interpretation, contained in Robinson’s translation of Wahl’s Lexicon, seems the most satisfactory of any which to my knowledge has ever been given, viz:—“It was the first Sabbath after the second day of the passover. Of the seven days of the passover, the first was a Sabbath, and on the second was a festival, in which the fruits of the harvest were offered to God. (Lev. xxiii, 5.) From this second day the Jews reckoned seven weeks or Sabbaths to the feast of Pentecost. (Lev. xxiii.) Hence the first week, or the first Sabbath which occurred after this second day, was called Ἐβδομας, or Σάββατον δευτερόπρωτον; i. e. the second Sabbath after the first.” The same interpretation is given also in Rosenmuller’s Scholia.

#### VERSE 12.

“And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”

That our Saviour’s animal frame should have been so invigorated, and his devotional frame of mind so continued, as that he might in fact have prayed *all night*, either mentally or vocally, is not at all incredible, especially if we have recourse to that divine, miraculous agency, which on another occasion enabled him to fast forty days and forty nights in succession. It should be observed, however, that the Greek word προσευχή, here translated prayer, signifies sometimes, both in the holy scriptures and in other writings, an oratory, a prayer-house, or *place of prayer*. Of these the Jews had many, and the pious among them frequently resorted thereto for devotional exercises. They were open at the top, were surrounded by trees, and frequently situated near to some sea or river. (Acts xvi, 13). And such is, probably, the



import of the word in this place. The sense of the passage then may be this : Jesus went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in a *place of prayer* ; where, undoubtedly, he was employed the greatest part of the time in devotional exercises.

#### CHAP. vii, 28.

“For I say unto you, among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist ; but he that is least in the kingdom of God, is greater than he.”

If this passage might be allowed to speak for itself, human explanation would be unnecessary, because it would then explain itself. It is true, that in the parallel place, Mat. xi, 11, the word *prophet* is not found ; but even there it is evidently understood. Greatness is of two kinds ; greatness in the sight of God, and greatness in the sight of men. The former of these is unquestionably here meant. But this also is two-fold, personal and official. Both of these may have been referred to by our Saviour, in this his declaration ; but the last is principally intended. (See Luke i, 15—18.) By the *kingdom of God* here mentioned, or, as it is in Mat. xi, 11, “kingdom of heaven,” is meant this kingdom under its new or (as it is commonly called) christian dispensation. In short, the meaning of the declaration before is obviously this, viz : that as *prophets* or teachers, none antecedent to John had been superior to him, as none had been favored with greater light and knowledge, and none had been sent on a more honorable and important embassy, (or indeed on one so honorable and important, for he was the immediate forerunner of our Lord, and sent directly to prepare his way) ; but yet, that the least true *prophet* or teacher, under the much more luminous dispensation of Christ, would, in the before mentioned respects, be superior to even John the Baptist. And hence, by the way, it is very evident that John the Baptist did not come under the christian dispensation, as some pretend.

#### VERSES 36—39.

“And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And behold a woman in the city, which was

a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment; and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

It is here said, Jesus "sat down to meat." It should, however, be remembered, that the word used in the original is ἀνέκλιθῃ, which signifies exactly, he lay down or reclined himself. The most usual word for sitting down is κάθημαι, or καθίζω, when used intransitively; and as to lie down, to recline one's self is the strict and proper meaning of the word ἀνοκλίνω, from which ἀνέκλιθῃ is derived; so such must be its *only* proper import in this passage. For if Jesus sat down in the sense in which we now understand the word; if, while eating at table in the Pharisee's house, he was really and properly in a sitting posture, the actions here attributed to this woman would have been evidently impossible. If Jesus sat down to meat as we now do, his feet being of course on the floor under the table, how could this woman get at them, to wash them? And besides, how could she wash them *standing*, as it is said she did? She "stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears." Verse 38. Frequently has the author's mind, especially in his youthful days, been much perplexed with this scripture, as it stands in our common version. Nor can any considerate reader avoid perceiving and feeling the difficulty attending it, until he becomes acquainted with the customs of the ancient Jews at their meals. These, according to Campbell and other authentic writers, were the following. Three couches were set in the form of the Greek letter Π. The guests lay down obliquely, reclining on their left arm, at the same time feeding themselves with their right hand, their feet being of course backwards. Their couches were somewhat higher than their tables. Hence we easily see how the woman might have *stood* behind Christ, i. e. on the back side of the couch, and have there washed and wiped his feet. The knowledge of this custom renders the whole history of this affair easy to be understood, and completely removes all the difficulties which must evermore be felt by such of us as know nothing of any other customs than our

own. The above remarks, by the way, may serve to explain what is meant by John's leaning on Jesus' bosom or breast, at table. (John xiii, 23, 25.)

#### CHAP. VIII, 22.

"Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples."

The word *ship*, as used by us, denotes the largest kind and highest rank of sailing vessels. But it would be a great error to suppose that the *πλοῖα* of the New Testament were of this description. In general, they were only barks, or barges, or sailing boats. There are two Greek words translated ship—*ναῦς* and *πλοῖον*. According to Schleusner, the former denotes a large vessel; the latter a small one, a fisherman's boat.

#### CHAP. XII, 35.

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning."

The ancient orientals were in the habit of wearing long, loose, and flowing garments. Whenever, therefore, they had to do any business which required strength and much activity, it would be necessary for them to tie and tuck up those garments; otherwise they must have proved to them a very serious impediment. Accordingly, we find that in such a case they did so. (See 1 Kings xviii, 46: 2 Kings iv, 29: Job xxxviii, 3: Jer. i, 17.) The phrase "lights burning," relates to the preparation which servants were to make for their masters, on their return from nocturnal feasts, especially marriage feasts. (See v. 36, and Mat. xxv, 1--10). This direction of our Lord, considered as thus allusive, is therefore replete with meaning and energy, and reminds us, that like the children of Israel, (Exod. xii, 11), we should be in continual readiness for marching; and that we should be very careful to cast away from us all those transgressions, and not to entangle ourselves with any of those worldly cares, which would prevent or impede the prompt discharge of our duty; and that with our lights or lamps thus burning, we should be always ready for the arrival of our Lord. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry."

## CHAP. XIII, 24.

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

The Greek word translated strive, signifies to agonise, to be in an agony, (Luke xxii, 44); and of course very impressively represents the earnestness, the vehemence, the violence, (Mat. xi, 12), with which we should seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. But how are we to understand the last part of the verse, “For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;” or shall not prevail? Do we not read, “Seek, and ye shall find; he that seeketh, findeth?” Our Lord might have meant by this expression, that many would seek to enter in by wrong ways, or certainly not by the *right* way, and in the right way; for observe, he does not say that they will *agonise* for this purpose; that they would strive to enter in at the strait gate, with a self-denial, an earnestness, and a perseverance, equal to that practised by worldly men, in quest of a corruptible crown. (See 1 Cor. ix, 25. where the same Greek word is used.) But what Christ principally intended was, that many would, in their way, seek to enter in when it should be *too late*, and hence should not be able. That such was most directly his meaning, is evident from his words immediately following: “When once the master of the house is risen up, and has *shut to the door*, and ye begin to stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence ye are.” Let none, therefore, forget that *now* is the accepted time; that *now* is the day of salvation. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Seek him before the door is *shut*, when it will be too late to find him.

## CHAP. XIV, 23.

“Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.”

The word *compel*, as defined by Walker, signifies “to force to some act, to oblige, to constrain;” and as vulgarly used in our days, it certainly denotes a kind of *coercive* influence. In this sense it seems to be sometimes used in the sacred writings, as in Mat. xxvii, 32: Acts xxvi, 11. But in this

place it surely can signify nothing more than to *urge*—to urge by importunate persuasion. Physical force has been frequently used by Papists, and sometimes by Protestants, to make converts to christianity, or rather to their own peculiar tenets; but invariably, when used, it has produced many more hypocrites than true Christians. The only conversion which the gospel recognises as real, sincere, genuine, is a *voluntary* one—the conversion of the heart; and the only means which it authorises for the accomplishment of this great purpose, are those of the moral kind, such as instruction, persuasion, exhortation, prayer, and the like.

#### VERSE 26.

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

Rightly to understand this apparently hard saying of Christ, some acquaintance with the idiom of the Hebrew; i. e. with the modes of expression peculiar to the Jews' language, is necessary. This is necessary to a correct interpretation of many passages in the New Testament; for though the original language of the New Testament be Greek, its idiom is the Hebrew; as we might well suppose would be the case, from the fact that all the writers of the New Testament, (with the exception perhaps of St. Luke), and our Lord Jesus Christ too, were themselves Hebrews or Jews. Among the peculiarities of their language was this, viz: expressing a thing absolutely, or with apparent absoluteness, when the thing itself, or the proposition affirming it, is to be understood *comparatively*. (See in illustration, Rom. ix, 13—“Jacob have I loved; but Esau have I hated;” not absolutely, but comparatively, or in comparison with Jacob. See also Ps. li, 16, compared with Mat. xii, 7.) And this same idiom obtains in the verse now under consideration. Its true meaning will appear by comparing it with the parallel passage, Mat. x, 37—“He that loveth father or mother *more than me*, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter *more than me*, is not worthy of me.” The hatred, therefore, which must be exercised by the Christian towards his near relatives, and which is here represented



as essential to one's being a true and accepted follower of Christ, is only a *comparative* hatred. We must hate them not absolutely, but comparatively, or in comparison with Christ; for surely his gospel neither requires nor allows us to hate, strictly and properly, *any* of our fellow creatures, but on the contrary, to love them all, even our enemies. (Mat. v, 44: 1 Thess. iii, 12.) The meaning, in a word, is this: We must love Christ *above all*. He must be enthroned supremely in our affections and judgments, and must, in our view, have *in all things the pre-eminence*. If, then, he should say to you or me, as he did to Peter, "Lovest thou me *more than these*," what answer must we give?

#### CHAP. XV, 7.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

How often has the question been put—Who are these ninety and nine just persons, that need no repentance? Surely the need, the absolute necessity of repentance, must be co-extensive with sinfulness and guilt. And "who can say, I have made my heart clean: I am pure from my sin?" Some expositors refer this expression to the *angels*, supposing that they, viz. those "angels which have kept their first estate," are intended thereby. It is conceded both that they are just persons, and that they need no repentance; but whether it be indeed true, that there is more joy in that holy and happy world, which has for so many thousand years been the place of their residence, over one repenting sinner of our race, than over them, or over *ninety and nine* of them, we may well doubt. The self-righteous *Pharisees*, and others like them, appear to have been the persons chiefly intended by this expression. (See Schleusner, Parkhurst, Bishop Pearce, &c.) But how, you will ask, could it be said that *they* need no repentance? Does not our Lord say to such characters, "Except *ye* repent, *ye* shall all likewise perish?" (Luke xiii, 3.) How, then, could it be said, and that too by Christ himself, the faithful and true witness, that they need no repentance? Answer—Just as well and just as properly as it may be said, "They that be whole need not a physi-



cian, but they that are sick." Those Pharisees were self-righteous to a great degree—just and righteous in their own apprehension. Hence the scripture speaks of them as trusting in themselves, that they were righteous, and as going about or seeking to establish their own righteousness. Nor was their righteousness ceremonial only; it did not consist only and entirely in an exact observance of the rites and ceremonies enjoined by the Mosaic law. In many respects they were really *moral*, in the usual sense of the word, and "blameless, touching the righteousness which is of the law." Hence the title of just persons was readily given to them by their countrymen generally. And from several passages of scripture it appears to have been not unusual for God to give to men, to the Jews especially, those titles or appellations by which they were usually distinguished among their fellow men. There is no difficulty in seeing how there should be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine *such* just persons, who *thought* they needed no repentance—no thorough change of character. O, sinners! what a weighty reason for your immediate repentance is here presented! Your pious relatives, ministers of the gospel, Christians generally, all heaven, would rejoice, in seeing you throwing down the weapons of your rebellion.

#### VERSE 18.

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee."

The only remark I shall make on this passage is, that it seems sufficiently to justify the use of such expressions as these—"rebellion against *heaven*," "assistance of *heaven*," &c. Some object to such expressions, on the ground that they savour too much of heathenism. Indeed, they may be used too frequently and too loosely. But when we use them understandingly and reverently, or, in a word, as not abusing them, we have scriptural warrant for our practice. See beside this passage, Ps. lxxiii, 9—"They set their mouth against the *heavens*;" i. e. against God. Dan. iv, 26—"Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the *heavens* do rule;" i. e. Jehovah doth rule.

## CHAP. XVI, 8, 9.

“And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”

The lord, i. e. the rich man mentioned in verse 1, *commended* the unjust steward. He did not *approve* of him as though he had done *rightly*; for he had no right thus to dispose of his master's property, without his master's consent; but commended, praised him, because he had done *wisely*, i. e. for himself, (compare Ps. xlix, 18), in thus providing for himself a home and a subsistence, after he should have been put out of the stewardship. “For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.” The meaning is, that worldly men are more prudent in forming, and more energetic and persevering in executing plans to obtain the riches and honours of this transitory world, than Christians are to secure an interest in the durable riches and everlasting honours of heaven. Alas, how true is this! But what can be the meaning of verse 9—“And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations?” Mammon, in this place, denotes riches, worldly possessions. (Compare Mat. vi, 24). The phrase, “mammon of unrighteousness,” is a Hebraism, for unrighteous mammon or riches, so called because they are often gotten unrighteously, as well as unrighteously and injuriously used. With this mammon of unrighteousness we are to make to ourselves friends, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations. One interpretation of these words is—that with the right use of this world's goods, we should conciliate the friendship of our fellow-men, so far as we can do it conscientiously and consistently; at any rate, that in our worldly affairs we should pursue such a course as can give no *just ground* of offence, and such as is well adapted for making them our friends, and would do it, were their hearts rightly disposed, and capable of being won by kindness; that with our worldly

possessions we should do good, especially to the poor and needy; should be like Job, eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, &c.; that when we die, and leave this present world, these our worthy friends, who have been relieved by our charities, i. e. those of them who have died before us, and gone to heaven, may receive us into heavenly mansions. If the phrase "they may receive you," must be understood literally; that is, if it must be understood as denoting some *particular persons*, and the *act* of some particular persons, it seems as though it ought to be referred to the persons just mentioned; those whom we may have made our friends, of or with the mammon of unrighteousness. Certainly the correspondence between the literal and the spiritual import of the parable, is much better presented by this interpretation, than by one which would refer this phrase to any other beings. For, it should be remembered, that the persons who received the unjust steward into their houses, were the *very same* who had been the subjects of his profuse, though unjustifiable beneficence. Another interpretation, however, of the last part of verse 9, may be given, and perhaps a better one. In ch. xii, 20, God is represented as saying to the rich man—"Thou fool, this night do or shall they require thy soul of thee;" for so it is in the Greek. But this is a Hebrew idiom, for "thy soul shall be required of thee," as it reads in our translation. So, when it is said, "they may receive you into everlasting habitations," the meaning may be, and probably is, simply this, viz. that ye may be received into everlasting habitations. This last is the interpretation adopted by Rosenmuller and several other distinguished critics.

#### CHAP. XVIII, 12.

"I fast twice in the week."

It appears from ancient records, that the two days of fasting among the Pharisees were the second and the fifth days of the week, or Thursday and Monday, as we denominate them; on Thursday, in memory of Moses' going up to Mount Sinai; and on Monday, in memory of his coming down from thence.

#### CHAP. XIX, 22.

—"Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow."

The intelligent reader readily perceives that either these words are to be understood as the language of the sinner's heart, or the whole is to be read interrogatively, thus—  
 “Knewest thou that I was an austere man?” &c.

#### CHAP. XX, 18.

“Whosoever shall fall upon that stone, (this stone, Mat. xxi, 44), shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

Christ here refers to himself, as, by way of eminence, *the stone*—the tried corner stone mentioned by Isaiah and David; and is supposed to predict the certain doom of two sorts of persons. Those who should fall upon him in present unbelief, and persecution, and finally in crucifying him, would be broken—terribly punished with the loss of their religious privileges, and with grievous temporal calamities, especially in the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, (wherein, as Josephus says, 1,100,000 Jews lost their lives). But a still more terrible punishment awaited the finally impenitent, on whom this mighty stone should fall, in his final, and holy, and tremendous wrath. It would “grind them to powder.” Therefore, “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

#### CHAP. XXI, 11.

—“And fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.”

Josephus, the Jewish historian, who was an eye-witness of the destruction of Jerusalem, says, that for some time before that event, a comet like a flaming sword waved over Jerusalem ; that there was in the air the appearance of contending armies ; that the great gate of the temple, which twenty men could scarcely shut, and which was made fast with bolts, was seen to open of its own accord, at the sixth hour of the night ; that at the feast of Pentecost, when the priests went at night into the temple to attend their service, they heard a great noise, and after that the sound as of a multitude, saying, “Let us go hence ;” that four years before the war, one Jesus, at the feast of tabernacles, began on a sudden to cry aloud, “A voice from the east, a voice

from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people ;” and that he continued this cry for seven years and five months. The testimony of Tacitus, also, the Roman historian, is to the same effect. We see, then, in part, what Christ intended by the fearful signs and great sights from heaven.

#### CHAP. XXII, 32.

—“And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

The word conversion is commonly used by Christians, to denote that great moral renovation called a change of heart, or, (as Christ expresses it, John iii, 3), a being *born again*. Hence the perplexity occasioned to some by these words of Christ to Peter. For was Peter, say they, never converted before? Was he never a good man until after his fall? In reply, it may be remarked, that there is no necessity of restricting the term conversion to the sense just mentioned. On the contrary, whether we regard the precise import of the word itself, or the manner in which it is commonly used and applied in the scriptures, we shall perceive that it is as properly applicable to those active moral exercises or christian graces in the creature, which *follow* regeneration, as it is to that great change itself. The meaning of this text appears to be as if Christ had said, ‘When thou, Peter, art brought to repentance, for this thy sin in denying me; knowing, as you then will know, the weakness of human nature, and of even good men, strengthen thy brethren.’ And it is very remarkable how Peter remembered and obeyed this direction of his Lord. In particular, his two epistles relate much to the subject of *trials*, and are excellently adapted to comfort and strengthen such as are “exercised thereby;” such as, to use his own words, “are in heaviness, through manifold temptations.”

#### CHAP. XXIII, 31.

“For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”

Among the Hebrews a virtuous man was often compared



to a tree flourishing in vigor and beauty; but the wicked were compared to a dry tree, the proper image of misery and death. (See in illustration, Ps. i, 3, and Isa. lvi, 3.) The sense of the passage, then, is as if Christ had said—‘If such things be done to the good, to myself, what shall be done to, what must be the punishment of, the incorrigible Jews, and of all the finally impenitent.’ Like the dry tree they will be fit only for the fuel, and their “end will be to be burned.” (Heb. vi, 8.)

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## JOHN.

### CHAPTER I, VERSE 16.

“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”

The last clause of this verse, which indeed is the only part of it that requires explanation, has been variously understood and interpreted. Believers are here said to receive from the fulness of Christ, *grace for grace*. What can be the precise meaning of this expression? Without mentioning all the constructions of this phrase which have been adopted by different expositors, I shall merely suggest that which on mature deliberation appears to me to be the best. The meaning of St. John, in this verse, is supposed to be as if he had said—‘From the fulness that is in Christ, the incarnate Word, have all we believers received spiritual supplies in great abundance and variety; and particularly grace for grace; i. e. there is grace in us, *answerable* to grace in him; we have the same *sort* of dispositions as he had. He had them, indeed, *without* measure, but we *in* measure, yet abundantly; and we are hereby conformed to the *image* of him who is the first born among many brethren.’ (Rom. viii, 29.)

### VERSE 21.

“And they asked him, what then? Art thou Elias? And he saith I am not.”

This is the record and testimony of John the Baptist respecting himself, according to St. John. But according to St. Matthew, xi, 13, 14, Jesus Christ, the faithful and true wit-



ness, said—"All the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come." Now, it must be allowed, there is at first an appearance of a contradiction between these two texts. John the Baptist says expressly, that he is *not* Elias; and Christ says as expressly, that he *is* Elias, which was for to come; i. e. who was to come as the forerunner of Christ, to prepare his way, agreeably to Isa. xl, 3, and Mal. iv, 5. Can these two texts be reconciled with each other? Answer—Easily, by only attending to the *meaning* of John and of Christ. John the Baptist meant that he was not that *identical* prophet, called Elias or Elijah, who appeared in the time of Ahab. Jesus Christ meant, that though John the Baptist was not that identical person, yet he came "in the *spirit* and *power* of Elias," (Luke i, 17); and in *this* sense, or in reference to this, he might properly be called Elias or Elijah. Hence we see, that neither did John the Baptist nor Christ say any thing but what was perfectly true, in the sense they meant to be understood, and that there is a perfect consistency between their respective declarations on this subject.

### CHAP. III, 3.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The Greek word here translated *again*, sometimes signifies *from above*, and is accordingly thus translated in verse 31st of this chapter, and in James i, 17. The word *man*, in this passage, is generic, denoting neither males of one age, to the exclusion of those of another, nor indeed the male sex, to the exclusion of the female; but mankind generally. In proof of this, it may be observed that the corresponding Greek word *τις* is thus generic, signifying exactly, *any one*. Let us, then, never forget that to enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, a spiritual change, an internal, moral renovation, is necessary; that this is necessary for every one, for the merely moral, as well as for the openly profane; and that for the production of this change, supernatural, divine influence is necessary; and let it be our unceasing prayer, "Cre-

ate in me a clean heart, O God ; renew a right spirit within me."

#### VERSE 12.

"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"

There is no other difficulty attending this passage, than what relates to the first part of it—"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not." The difficulty lies in seeing how this remark can be *true*. For did the Lord Jesus, while on earth, spend his time in talking to the people about earthly, worldly things? From his life, as written by the Evangelists, we certainly should not draw any such conclusion; but the contrary would thence most clearly appear. At least, it would thence appear that he was never in the habit of talking about worldly things, except for the illustration of heavenly things. How, then, are we to understand these words? It should be remembered that the entire paragraph, from the 1st to the 13th verse, relates to the new birth. The verse now under consideration is only a continuation of the same subject. By earthly things, therefore, our Saviour must have intended the *new birth itself*—its nature, necessity, and the mysterious manner in which it is effected; of which points he had just spoken. (See verses 3, 5, 8.) These might be called *earthly* things, because that great moral change is confined to this earth or world, and must be effected *here*, if any where; because it might be illustrated by earthly things, as water and wind; and because it is a simple subject, and to the true Christian plain, and easy to be understood, especially as compared with *heavenly* things—things relating more directly to the inhabitants, exhibitions, employments, and enjoyments of the heavenly world; subjects, which, to a mind like that of Nicodemus, would be more abstruse, refined, unintelligible, and incredible.

#### VERSE 13.

"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven."

Of all those subjects which lay beyond the reach of ordinary human investigation, the Hebrews were accustomed to say that they were *in heaven*; and if any appeared to under-

stand them, he was said by them to have been in heaven, and thence to have obtained his knowledge. (See Deut. xxx, 12, and Prov. xxx, 4.)

### VERSE 23.

“And John also was baptising in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there.”

Much water—in Greek ὕδαπα πολλά, literally, many waters. I find in my Hebrew Bible, an exactly correspondent phrase used, in Num. xx, 11, viz: MAIM RABBIM. The radical Hebrew word רַבָּאִי, signifies to be, or to become great, either in number or in quantity. Our translators have rendered the clause referred to in this last verse, viz. Num. xx, 11, thus:—“The water came out abundantly.” Literally, it would be, “many or great waters came out.” But whichsoever of these words be used, many or great, it cannot be rationally supposed that a river, or indeed a stream of water of any considerable depth, was produced by Moses’ striking the rock with his rod. The Psalmist, speaking of the same event, says—“Behold he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed.” (Ps. lxxviii, 20.) The meaning is, the waters flowed from the rock, and ran along on the ground, in such quantities as were sufficient to quench the thirst of the Israelites and of their cattle. And as this Hebrew phrase answers exactly to the Greek one, in John iii, 23, I would propose it as a query worthy of some attention, especially from linguists, whether this last passage is so decisive in proof of baptismal *immersion*, as is by some supposed.

### CHAP. IV, 11.

“The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water?”

From Rauwolf, as cited by Harmer, (vol. 2, page 142, Clark’s edition), we learn that the wells in Judea have no implements to draw water with, except what those persons bring with them who go thither to draw. Speaking particularly of the wells at Bethlehem, he says, “The people that go to dip water, are provided with small leathern buckets

and a line, as is usual in these countries." Hence, then, we may see the reason why the Samaritan woman was so much astonished at Christ's offering her water to drink, (i. e. material water, for she understood him to mean that), when he had nothing to draw with—had not provided himself with the leathern bucket and the line. No wonder that in such a case she should be astonished at Christ's remark, especially as she did not then know *who it was* that said to her, "Give me to drink." (Verse 10.) How clearly and impressively do these words of the woman to Christ, together with the whole conversation that passed between them, illustrate the backwardness, the dullness of sinners, in receiving spiritual instruction! Though Christ referred to the water of life, and was explicit enough to convince any one not wholly blind, that he did refer to it, (see verses 10, 14); yet she all the while understood him as referring to material water only. And how evident it is from this instance, that the understanding of the female sex also, as well as of the male, is in respect to spiritual things, "darkened, by reason of the blindness (or callousness) of their hearts!"

#### VERSE 20.

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

To understand the import of this remark of the Samaritan woman, it is necessary to recur to a few facts in sacred history. It should, however, be first observed, that Mount Gerizim was the mountain to which this woman here refers. Near to this mountain the patriarchs, and particularly Jacob, erected altars, (Gen. xxxiii, 20, &c.); and from it Moses pronounced the blessing. (Deut. xxvii, 12.) No temple, however, was erected there until the time of Sanballat, the well known contemporary and adversary of Nehemiah. From Josephus we learn, that this Sanballat, finding himself unable to prevent the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem by Nehemiah, resolved to build another of his own elsewhere. He was, it seems, determined to prevent the performance of divine worship, especially of sacrificial worship, *at Jerusalem*; and if he could not accomplish his purpose in one way, he meant to do it another. If the temple

must be rebuilt on Mount Zion, he would build another on Mount Gerizim. Hence, as he supposed, the people would become divided; and thus his darling object would be, at least in part, accomplished. Accordingly, through his instrumentality, a temple was erected on Mount Gerizim. And these two temples stood in a state of mutual rivalry and opposition for about two hundred and twenty years; and until Hircanus, a high priest of the Jews, destroyed the one on Mount Gerizim, about one hundred and thirty-one years before Christ. But so long as this temple stood, the Samaritans resorted to it for worship; and even after it was destroyed, and no vestige of the edifice itself was visible, its very site was considered as holy ground, and was accordingly resorted to by the Samaritans for devotional purposes. Hence, then, the remark, and hence the meaning of the remark of the Samaritan woman, "*Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.*" But still the Jews believed that divine public worship ought to be performed, and that especially sacrifices ought to be offered, at Jerusalem; and this opinion they, it seems, considered as sufficiently supported by such passages as 1 Kings xi, 32, &c. The truth is, both these sorts of people had been in an error; the one for ascribing too much, and the other for ascribing too little importance to Jerusalem, and to divine worship as *there* performed. In 2 Kings xxi, 7, we read, that "The Lord said to David, and to Solomon his son—In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name forever;" and this, surely, implies that some peculiar sanctity was attached to that city and to its temple, and that they both had been and would be peculiarly privileged. Yet it could not hence be inferred that any other place or temple was in itself unholy, nor that religious worship would fail of acceptance, merely because it was performed elsewhere. Still less ground could there have been for the belief in the exclusive holiness of any particular places or temples, since the advent of the Messiah, as the *darkness then passed away, and the true light shined*. Hence said our Lord to the woman, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true wor-



shippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

#### CHAP. v, 18.

"Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

This is one among the many scriptural passages, in which, though the general idea is given, the exact meaning and force of the original have not been transfused into our version. The word *ἰδιος*, in the Greek, signifies not merely his, but *his own*, as we say. "It denotes property, appropriation, or peculiar relation." (Parkhurst.) This then is the meaning:—He said that God was *his own* Father ; i. e. his by way of eminence ; peculiarly his Father ; his Father in a sense in which he is not the Father of mere men, nor of any other being. Indeed, it is evident the Jews understood him to mean thus, because they understood his claiming the filial relation in question, as equivalent to "his making himself equal with God." Besides, it is impossible to account for the *rage* which this declaration of Christ excited in their minds, on any other ground. This passage, then, rightly interpreted, is more in point, and has more weight in proving Christ's *divinity*, than common readers are apt to imagine.

#### VERSE 31.

"If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true."

It is difficult to see why any man, and especially the "faithful and true Witness," might not speak the truth, in opposition to speaking falsehood, of himself, as well of any other person or thing. The meaning of Christ, therefore, must have been, "If I *only* bear witness of myself, my testimony is not valid and sufficient;" i. e. is not what your law requires, for that requires at least two or three witnesses ; and if this number were necessary for the condemnation of a criminal, (Deut. xvii, 6), undoubtedly it must be to prove the divine mission of a prophet. That the word *true*, in this verse, means *sufficient*, and that our Lord here referred to the above mentioned requisition in the Jewish law, further appears, from his proceeding to mention *three* wit-



nesses in his favor; that of his Father, (verse 37); that of John the Baptist, (verse 33); and that of his own works, (verse 36.)

#### CHAP. VIII, 36.

“If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

The only remark I would make on this scripture is, that it justifies the distinction sometimes made between *moral* freedom and *spiritual* freedom; for these Jews were certainly in some sense free already. Else they would not have been moral agents, nor of course accountable for their actions; for freedom is an essential property of moral agency, and absolutely necessary to render any one accountable. No one, it is presumed, will deny that these Jews were accountable creatures. They must then have been free agents; i. e. they must have possessed *moral* freedom—the freedom of moral agents. But yet these words of Christ plainly imply that there is another kind of freedom attainable by men, and one more excellent than the other—the fruit of his gospel and renewing grace, of which these Jews were, and of course all the unrenewed are, utterly destitute; for “*who-soever committeth (or practiseth) sin, is the servant of sin.*” (Verse 34.) And this is what may be called, in contradistinction to the other, *spiritual* freedom, or (to use scripture language) “the glorious liberty of the children of God.” The due consideration of these two sorts of freedom, and of the difference between them, might serve to silence, at least to confute, many of the objections which are now brought against the calvinistic exhibition of some evangelical subjects. Possibly both these sayings may yet be true, and consequently consistent with each other, viz: “Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely;” and “No man *can* come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.” (Rev. xxii, 17: John vi, 44.)

#### CHAP. X, 12.

“But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep.”

This passage would not be particularly noticed in a trea-

tise of this kind, had it not become necessary to protest against that misapplication of it which has been made by ignorant and bigoted people. How often have such persons applied it to those ministers of the gospel, who have received, and thought it right to receive, from their people, a stipulated worldly maintenance! How often have such ministers been called *hirelings*, because they received pay, i. e. a maintenance, and frequently a very scanty one too, for their services! At the same time, it is remarkable that no other class of citizens in community has been branded with this odious appellation, merely for this reason. It is taken for granted by these persons, that all other sorts of people are of right entitled to reward for their labours, themselves not excepted. But if a minister receives, and especially if he demands such reward, he is immediately called a *hireling*. Now these persons ought to be instructed in this one thing, viz. that there is a great difference between a *mere hireling*, and a *hired man*. A hireling, as we usually understand the term, is a mere mercenary, working only for the sake of the wages. But a hired man need not be of this description. For though many hired men, and some hired ministers, are undoubtedly hirelings also; yet their being so is not owing to the bare fact, that they receive and expect pay for their work, but solely to the selfish, sordid *disposition* with which they work and receive their pay; to the circumstance, that as the pay was the only motive to, so it is the only end of their working. The distinguishing badge of the hireling intended by Christ, is "*not caring for the sheep.*" But must we certainly conclude, that no man who feeds a flock, can have any care at all for the welfare of the flock, merely because he believes in, and claims his right to eat of the milk of the flock? (See 1 Cor. ix, 7, with the context.) If every hired man must necessarily be a hireling too, in the bad and usual sense of that term, what a humiliating view would this give us of ninety-nine out of a hundred of our race; for probably as large a proportion of them as this, is sometimes, and in some way or other, hired by their fellow men.

## CHAP. XIV, 12.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father.”

This verse contains two propositions:—1. That the believer in Christ should do not only the same, but even greater works than Christ had done. 2. That the reason of this, was Christ's going to his Father. And that both are true, we ought not to doubt, because they were both delivered from the mouth of “the faithful and true Witness” himself, and are introduced with “verily, verily,” an asseveration, or emphatical expression, which he frequently used when he was about to assert and inculcate some very important truth. But the question is, *how*, or in *what sense*, are they true? In what sense was it to be understood that believers in Christ, i. e. the apostles, should do greater works than any he had done? Answer—These words of Christ may relate to *miracles* in part, but they relate chiefly to the *success* which should attend and follow the apostle's ministry. The apostles were to have, and they actually had, more visible success in their evangelical labours, than Christ, while on earth, had in his. The number of those who became converts to christianity after Christ's death, viz. in the apostolic age, or during the lives and by the labours of the apostles, was much greater than that of those who became converts during Christ's life time. From the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, it appears that the conversion of three thousand souls was the fruit of a single sermon delivered by St. Peter; a number, probably, much greater than the *whole* number of those who became Christ's friends and followers, during his personal abode on earth. And the reason why the apostles should (instrumentally) do such great and mighty works, was, that Christ would go to his Father, and thence, having received gifts for men, would send down upon them his Holy Spirit, and thus endue them with power from on high. (John xvi, 7—12: Luke xxiv, 49.) It is said in reference to the time of Christ's personal residence on earth, “The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John vii, 39.) But after the heavens had received him to the glory which he had with

the Father, before the world was, the blessed Spirit was indeed given, and much more remarkably and gloriously than it had ever been before; not only in his miraculous, but also in his illuminating, awakening, renewing, quickening, comforting, and saving influences.

#### CHAP. XV, 2.

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

Persons may be said to be in Christ in two senses; by *profession* merely, and in reality, or by a *vital* union. Those of the former class are unfruitful, and must as such be taken away—removed; but not so with the latter, nor with any one of them; for “every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit:” “He purgeth it,” i. e. he pruneth it; for such was evidently the meaning of Christ in this place. For the metaphor is taken from vines and fruit trees, whose branches are *pruned*, or cleared of useless shoots and twigs, that they may thereby become more fruitful.

#### CHAP. XVI, 13.

“Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.”

In the original, the definite article is used; it is *τὴν ἀληθείαν*. The English translation, therefore, ought to have been “into all *the* truth.” The necessity of this interpretation appears, not only from the circumstance relative to the article, but also from another circumstance or fact equally undeniable, viz. that it surely is not the office-work of the Holy Spirit to lead men into truth and science of *all kinds*. The ordinary teachings and influences of the Holy Ghost have no concern with any other sort of truth than *evangelical* truth, or, as the scripture calls it, “the truth as it is in Jesus.”

#### VERSE 23.

“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.”

Though the word *ask* occurs in both the members of this

text, its meaning is not the same ; nor is it in the Greek the same word that is used, in both these instances. In the former it is ἐρωτᾶω, which signifies properly to interrogate, to *ask questions* ; in the latter it is αἰτέω, which signifies simply to *beg*, to beseech, to pray. Our Saviour's meaning, when he said, " In that day ye shall ask me nothing," was, that in that day, i. e. after he had ascended to heaven, and the Holy Spirit had been poured out, their minds would be so enlightened, and their views so rectified and enlarged, that they would not have occasion to *question* him—to enquire of him about the meaning of his words, nor to consult him in their difficulties, as frequently before they had found it necessary to do. Prayer, however, would be as necessary afterwards as it ever had been ; only it would be offered in a different manner from what it had been. During " all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them," they had been accustomed to offer their petitions in a great measure *to him* directly. But henceforth, in consequence of being more enlightened by the Spirit in respect to the true way of access to the mercy-seat, they would pray more directly *to the Father* in his name, or through his mediation, and intercession ; and these their petitions would be answered. It is remarkable, also, that *whatsoever* they should ask the Father in his name, He would give it them. Whatever special reference this language, and language like it used in a few other places, (see chap. xiv, 14 : Mark xi, 23, 24), might have had to the apostles, *as such*, it seems it does not refer to them exclusively. For St. John, writing to Christians generally, says, (1 John v. 14, 15)—" And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask *any thing according to his will*, he heareth us : And if we know that he hear us, *whatsoever* we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." The most enlightened, the most spiritual, and the most *prayerful* among Christians, generally agree in this ; that much more is included in the *prayer of faith* than is commonly imagined. And so far as the passage before us is applicable to believers generally, it certainly appears to favour such a sentiment.



## CHAP. XIX, 11.

“Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above : Therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.”

There is no difficulty attending the first part of this verse. Our Lord here implicitly reproves Pilate for his arrogance, in pretending to so much power against him, and reminds him that all this his power was given him from above. Of course, it was not his own originally, but he was dependent for it. He had received it, and he ought not to glory as though he had not received it. Some difficulty, however, attends the last part of this verse, as connected with the first part. The word “therefore,” commonly denotes some inference from what has been said before ; or it is used to give some reason for what had been before said. But how could the mere circumstance, that all Pilate’s power against Christ was *given him from above*, or from heaven, be of itself any reason why Caiaphas and the Jewish Council, who delivered Christ to Pilate ; had any greater sin in the affair of Christ’s final condemnation and crucifixion, than Pilate had ? Doubtless, the former were in fact far more criminal in this affair than the latter. But wherefore ? Evidently, because they had so much greater light and knowledge respecting the true God and his law, and the doctrine, miracles, and life of Jesus, than Pilate, a heathen, had ; and because, notwithstanding all this, they “delivered up Jesus, and denied him, in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them, and killed the Prince of Life.” They, therefore, sinned against far greater light and knowledge than Pilate did ; and *this* we suppose to have been the reason why they were more criminal in this affair than Pilate was ; and not the mere circumstance that all Pilate’s power against Christ was given him from heaven.—There is another reading of this passage, cited by Rosenmuller, and adopted by some critics, and which probably is the true reading. The reading in question includes a change in the punctuation, by connecting *διὰ τοῦτο*, “therefore,” with *ἀνωθεν*, “from above,” thus :—“Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above, *for this purpose*. He

that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." Every Greek scholar knows that the preposition and pronoun here used, may be translated indifferently, *therefore, on this account, for this purpose*, according to the exigency of the case. I would only add, (what indeed every reader must perceive), that this latter reading gives a good sense, entirely clears the passage of all difficulty, and renders the whole plain, and easy to be understood.

#### CHAP. XX, 17.

"Jesus saith unto her, touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

The question is, how could the circumstance that Jesus had not yet ascended to his Father, be a reason why Mary might not touch him? That this scripture may be rightly understood, its several clauses must be considered connectively. The following paraphrase will, as is believed, illustrate the Saviour's meaning:—"Touch me not, Mary, at present; i. e. do not stand indulging your personal affection towards me; for I am not yet ascended to my Father, as you see, but shall yet spend some further time on earth with my disciples; so that you may hereafter have opportunity to see and converse with me. But for the present I appoint you to other business. Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." We should always be willing to forego private, personal gratification, when it interferes with the public good.

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### ACTS.

#### CHAPTER I, VERSE 6.

"When they, therefore, were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" i. e. Wilt thou now deliver us from the Roman yoke, and reinstate us once more, in the rank, rights, and privileges, of an independent kingdom?

How impressively, then, does this question show, that even pious and good men (for such the apostles undoubtedly were) may be the subjects of much weakness in faith, and of many defective and erroneous views ! Though Christ had so explicitly declared, " My kingdom is not of this world," his disciples generally, and even his apostles, had been slow of heart to believe this ; and had, it seems, never ceased to indulge the imagination that their Master would, in due time, assume and wield the sceptre of an earthly prince. That they had this notion, " all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them," is plain, from several passages in the Evangelists. (See Mat. xx, 21 : Mark ix, 34 : Luke xxiv, 21.) And this mistaken notion they continued to cherish, until after his resurrection, as the text now under consideration plainly evinces. Doubtless the apostles had *some* just views of the true nature of the Messiah's reign ; but those views were at best obscure and very imperfect, and continued so until the memorable day of Pentecost. The lesson we may hence learn, or rather the practical conclusion we *ought* hence to draw, is, not to deny to others the character, nor refuse to them the peculiar privileges of true Christians, merely because they may be weak in faith, and their views of truth may be in some respects defective, or even erroneous ; provided, at the same time, their *practice* be in the main, " such as becomes the gospel of Christ."

#### VERSE 12.

" Then returned they unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey."

The " Sabbath day's journey" of the Jews was about two thousand cubits, eight furlongs, or, in other words, about one mile. Perhaps one reason why this particular distance was assigned, was, that this was the distance required to be between the ark and the camp, (Josh. iii, 4) ; and as the towns in Judea were commonly small in respect to local extent, so this distance would be usually as much as needed to be travelled over, in order to reach their synagogues, the usual places of their worship. There may be no ground for supposing that the same rigorous restriction, if it may be

so called, is now imposed on us ; yet surely we may hence lawfully conclude, that *such* travelling on the Sabbath as is practised by many persons at the present day, and that too merely for worldly purposes, is highly improper and wrong.

# CHAP. II, 27.

“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, (εἰς ᾅδου) ; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

This is a quotation from Ps. xvi, 10. It is evident that the primary reference of the words was to David himself ; and it is equally evident from St. Peter's application of them, in verse 31st of this chapter, that they are referable principally and ultimately to Jesus Christ. The question then immediately arises, in what sense are they, in this application to be understood ? That Christ's soul should not be *left* in hell, is not at all incredible. But the thing implied in the declaration, viz. that Christ, or Christ's soul, was once *there*, creates the difficulty. For the explanation of this passage the following remarks may be useful, especially to common readers. There are two Greek words which are translated hell, viz. Ἄδης, and Γέννα. But their precise signification is very different. Ἄδης, or Ἀδης, is derived from α and εἶδω, and means of course *invisible*. It is synonymous with the Hebrew word SHEOLE. Ἀδης denotes sometimes the *grave*, but more commonly the state of the dead, or the region and state of separate spirits after death, whether that state be a state of happiness or of misery. To the rich man, (Luke xvi, 23), Ἀδης was a state of misery. We cannot, however, determine that he was in misery, merely because he was in Ἀδης ; for Lazarus, who was not in misery, was there also. But that the rich man was in misery, we infer solely from other circumstances, other expressions used in this chapter, such as “being in torments,” “I am tormented in this flame,” &c. They were both in Ἀδης ; i. e. they were both in the state or region of departed spirits ; but to the one, Ἀδης was “joy unspeakable ;” to the other, “everlasting burnings.” Of both the Hebrew and the Greek term we may affirm, however, that they have not, either of them, *in themselves considered*, any necessary connection with future punishment, as will be evident to any one who will examine

in the Hebrew Bible, and in the Septuagint translation, the following passages, viz: Gen. xlii, 38: Isa. xiv. 9, and xxxviii, 10. But Γέεννα denotes properly the place of torment. It is derived from GE and HINNOM, i. e. the valley of Hinnom. (See Josh. xv, 8.) In this valley, sometimes called Tophet, the idolatrous Israelites caused their children to pass through the fire, to Moloch. (2 Kings xxiii, 10.) From its having been the place of such horrid crimes, and abominations, and miseries, it came to pass, in process of time, that the word Γέεννα was used to signify the future state of sin and misery. If now the inquiry be, in what sense Christ went to hell, or, in other words, what is meant by Acts ii, 27, the verse before us, the reply is—all that is meant by it is, that he was for a season, not in Γέεννα, the place of torment, but in Ἀδης, the grave, the state of the dead, the region of departed spirits. In that state, however, Christ was not to be *left*; and, we know, he was not left there. His body was not left in the grave, so as to see or experience corruption there; nor was his soul or spirit left in the region of departed spirits. From that state of the dead into which Christ descended, he arose again in his perfect man, consisting of both soul and body.

#### CHAP. VI, 1.

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.”

The word in the original, which is here translated Grecians, denotes not the descendants of Javan, or the proper Greeks, but Grecised Jews, or Hellenists, as they are commonly called; i. e. those Jews, who, having resided in countries where the Greek language prevailed, had themselves learned to use that language, in place of that dialect of the Hebrew which was then spoken by their countrymen generally. These persons also commonly used the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament, in place of the Hebrew scriptures.



## CHAP. IX, 7, COMPARED WITH XXII, 9.

“And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.” But in ch. xxii, 9, it is said—“And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard *not* the voice of him that spake to me.”

All the difficulty we meet with in comparing these two passages, arises from their apparent contradiction. For in the first it is said that Paul’s fellow travellers heard a voice; and in the last, that they heard *not* the voice. Now, on first inspection, it is evident, that either there is in reality a contradiction between these two statements; the one of St. Luke respecting Paul, and the other of St. Paul respecting himself; or the Greek word ἀκούω (hear) is used in different senses in these two passages. The latter is undoubtedly the truth. In the Greek classics, as Kype has shown, the word ἀκούω is sometimes used to signify *understanding*, as well as mere hearing. The same word is so used, and so translated, in 1 Cor. xiv, 2; and so manifestly is it to be understood in Acts xxii, 9. There is, therefore, no contradiction between these two passages. Taken together, their meaning is this: Paul’s companion’s heard a voice, i. e. heard a noise, a sound; yea heard the voice itself, though they neither understood its meaning, nor distinctly heard the articulate words which were spoken. They *heard* the voice with the ear, but did not *understand* it—did not understand the meaning of it.

## CHAP. XIV, 15.

“Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God,” &c.

It is probable that the most of common readers understand the word “passions” here in its *bad* sense, as denoting the bad, the wicked passions. And there can be no doubt that the apostles were to a degree, and at times, the subjects of such passions even as others; because, though good men, they were sanctified but in part, and had still a law in their members, warring against the law of their minds, as Paul acknowledges respecting himself. (Rom. vii, 23.) At the same time, whether we regard the proper import of the

Greek word ὁμοιοπαθεῖς, which signifies, to be affected in like manner, subject to like infirmities and sufferings; or the main object of the apostles, in this their expostulation with the men of Lystra, which was to “restrain the people that they should not do sacrifice unto them,” (verse 18); we must be convinced that they meant to tell the people something more or other, than that they the apostles were *depraved* and *wicked* men like themselves. It seems that the Lystrans at first supposed that Paul and Barnabas were some supernatural, celestial beings, because Paul had just wrought a miracle before their eyes; that they were, in short, some of their own deities. Hence they called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, and were for immediately offering sacrifices unto them. To dissuade them from such idolatrous and sacrilegious adoration, the apostles “rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you,” &c. Now, it should be remembered, that the Lystrans, as well as other heathens, generally believed already, that their deities were in fact of like passions with themselves. But this their belief was no impediment, but rather an excitement to their worshipping them. For the apostles, therefore, to have merely announced to the Lystrans, that they, their supposed deities, were of like irascible, or voluptuous, or ambitious passions with themselves, would not have served either to afford them any new information, or to restrain them from their meditated idolatry; which last, as before observed, was the main object they had in view. What the apostles, then, most directly meant in this declaration, was to teach the Lystrans *who*, rather than *what* they were; to declare their *human*, rather than their *moral* character; that they were not “gods in the likeness of men,” as they had supposed, but mere *men*, their fellow mortals, subject to the same infirmities, calamities, and mortality, with themselves; and therefore not the proper objects of divine worship, which was due not to any *mere men*, as they were, nor to any mere creature, but to *Jehovah* only—to “the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.”

## CHAP. XVI, 34.

—“He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

It is well known that this passage has been much used in the baptismal controversy, especially by those writers who advocate the doctrine, that adults or believers *only*, are, according to scripture, admissible to baptism. The Pedobaptist alledges, verse 33, viz: “And (the jailer) was baptised, he and all his straightway,” as proving, from apostolic precedent, the propriety and duty of household baptism, in his sense of the phrase. The Antipedobaptist or Baptist (as he is commonly called) replies, the household of the jailer were believers; and for proof of his position refers you to the words now before us—“He rejoiced, believing in God, *with all his house.*” That the household of this man were in fact baptised, both parties concede. The only difference in sentiment between them on this point, respects the *ground* or *reason* of their baptism. The one thinks they were baptised on the ground of the faith of their *head*; the other concludes they were baptised on the ground of their *own* faith, and thinks that this passage proves it, or proves at any rate, that his household, and *all* his household, were believers; for it says, “He rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house.” Now, there is nothing in the Greek, that answers to the phrase, “with all his house,” but one compound word, viz. *πανοικί*, an adverb. Every Greek scholar knows that these words, translated into English in the *order* in which they stand in the original, would run thus:—“He rejoiced in or with all his house, having (i. e. he having) believed God.” The single question is, whether, in translating this sentence into our tongue, the same order in respect to the location of words ought to be observed, as is observed in the original. In both the Latin and Greek languages, words are very frequently transposed. Sometimes, also, though not so frequently, the same is the case with the Hebrew. Now the question is, whether they ought to be transposed in this place, or to stand as they are. If the latter—if the words are to be translated in the order in which they stand in the original, *πανοικί* would naturally qualify *ἡγαλλιάσθω*, he rejoiced. If they should be transposed, then *πανοικί* would naturally qualify *πεπιστευκώς*, he believed. According to

the first arrangement, the sense would be this :—"He rejoiced with all his house, (he) having believed God." According to the last, this :—"He rejoiced, having believed God, with all his house." It is evident our translators thought the words ought to be transposed, because in their version they have transposed them. Whether they judged rightly or not, is a question I shall not at present discuss. Before this scripture is dismissed, I would, however, remark, that in other places, where the faith of the *household* was clearly meant to be expressed, the phraseology in the original is somewhat different from what it is here ; and the difference appears in two respects ; the Greek words used to express the household, or family, are not the same exactly as in this instance ; and the faith or the religious act of the parent or head of the household is mentioned *first in order*, i. e. before the household is mentioned. (See in the Greek Testament, John iv, 53 : Acts x, 2 ; and xviii, 8.)

#### CHAP. xvii, 3.

"Opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead ; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

Small words often very materially affect the meaning of a sentence ; and none more so than the articles *a* and *the*. "Thou art *the* man," said Nathan to David. (2 Sam. xii, 7.) How differently must David have felt in hearing these words, particularly in the then existing circumstances, from what he would have felt had the prophet said to him merely—thou art man, or—thou art *a* man ! The difference in meaning and force between these expressions, every one intuitively sees. These remarks are applicable to, and may serve to explain, the passage now under consideration. To say that Jesus is Christ, or *a* Christ, is one thing. To say that he is *the* Christ, is another, and a quite different thing. Be it remembered, that the names Jesus Christ (the one of Hebrew, the other of Greek derivation) are, like most of the other proper names of scripture, significant and characteristic. Jesus signifies *Saviour* ; Christ signifies *anointed*. It should be remembered, also, that the great and principal point in debate between the adherents to Judaism, and the

advocates for Christianity, in the apostles' days, was, (as indeed it has been ever since), whether Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ predicted and promised in the Old Testament, or not. The former contended he was not, but an impostor, (as of course he must have been, if he were not the true Messiah); the latter maintained that he was, and appealed to the prophecies, and reasoned with the Jews out of their own scriptures, in proof of the point. On some accounts, it was peculiarly important that the apostles should "testify to the *Jews*, that Jesus was the Christ," if indeed he were really so; as the apostles were most fully assured. For, as a people, the Jews "received him not" in this character; they could not rightly understand many parts of their own scriptures, of the prophecies especially, without the admission of this point of doctrine; they could not otherwise perceive their own real and enormous guilt in crucifying him; and the knowledge of this truth was absolutely necessary, that they might see that their own dispensation was then passing away. Accordingly, we find from the Acts of the Apostles, that when the apostles preached to the *Jews*, they insisted particularly on this single point—that Jesus was the Messiah. And what the apostle in this place intended to testify to his hearers, (who by the way were a congregation of *Jews*), doubtless was something more than that Jesus was *a* Christ—an anointed one. He meant to tell them that Jesus was *the* Christ;—the true Messiah foretold by the prophets; Jehovah's anointed One, by way of eminence, and superiority to all others. (Ps. xlv, 7.) And as he *meant* to tell them so, he *did* tell them so; for in the original it is ὁ Χριστός, *the* Christ. As the definite article is used in the Greek, it ought not to be omitted in our version. This clause, then, translated literally and exactly, would run thus:—"This Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is *the* Christ." And how important it is to contend earnestly for this doctrine in these days, since there are now so many, not only among Jews, but among *Gentiles* also, who deny the Lord that bought them!



## ROMANS.

## CHAPTER 1, VERSE 17.

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith.”

By “the righteousness of God,” in this place, seems to be intended God’s method of making sinners righteous; or, in other words, his method of justifying and saving sinners. Such is evidently the import of this phrase, as used in several other parts of this epistle. (See particularly ch. iii, 21—27, and x, 3—5.) But what is to be understood by the expression, “revealed from faith to faith?” The word *πίστις* (faith) sometimes signifies *fidelity* or *faithfulness*, as in Rom. iii, 3: Titus ii, 10: in which last place it is also rendered fidelity. This word, as we see, occurs twice in this place—“revealed from faith to faith.” In the first instance, it seems to denote an important object of our faith or belief, viz. the faithfulness of God; and in the last, that internal act or exercise of the creature, which we usually call faith. In a word, the general import of this verse appears to be, that in the gospel, God, from or in the exercise of his faithfulness, revealeth to our faith his glorious righteousness, i. e. his method of justifying and saving sinners. This He, in the gospel, revealeth to our faith, as an object to be believed by us. It is only by faith in this righteousness that we can live—be justified and saved here, and be entitled to eternal life hereafter.

## CHAP. II, 5.

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

It hence appears, that the purpose for which the day of judgment and its investigations have been appointed, is not that the supreme Judge may *find out* what the character and conduct of men and angels have been; (these he knew before); but it is that He may *reveal* to the assembled universe the reasonableness and rectitude of his moral government; that He may *show*, make it manifest, that both in the dispensations of his providence, and in the kingdom of grace, He, the Judge of all the earth, has done and will then

do rightly, towards and with all created moral agents ; that, in short, the day of judgment is appointed for *his* sake as well as theirs ; to illustrate and vindicate *his own character*, in those irreversible sentences which will then be passed upon all his accountable creatures.

#### CHAP. IV, 4, 5.

“ Now, to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

Religious works are of two kinds, works of the law, and works of faith ; or, as they are sometimes called, works legal, and works evangelical. Now, working of the first sort is intended by St. Paul, in these verses ; as appears from the circumstance, that the working here mentioned is opposed to *believing*, which is itself, in a certain sense, a work ; for, “ This is the work of God, said Christ, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” (John vi, 29.) But it is an *evangelical* work ; it is not performed with the view or expectation of meriting any thing by it. The meaning of St. Paul, therefore, was as if he had said—‘ To him that worketh on legal principles, the reward, in case there were any, would be of course considered as a debt. But to him that worketh not, i. e. on *legal principles*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly ; that seeks justification, not by works but from mere grace through faith, his faith is counted for righteousness.’ Surely, nothing could have been further from the apostle’s meaning in these words, than to assert, either that a true believer does not work *at all*, or that the final reward of such an one will be a reward of *debt*.

#### VERSE 11.

“ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised ; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised ; that righteousness might be imputed to them also.”

I would here propose it as a query, whether commentators in general have hit on the true, or rather the full meaning of

one particular in this most instructive passage. It is here said, "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, &c. *that he might be the father of all them that believe.*" Abraham is, accordingly, often called the father of believers, and doubtless in reference to the phraseology used in this verse. But the question is, in what sense is Abraham the father of believers, of *all* them that believe? The very prevalent, and probably the general sentiment, is, that he is their father by virtue of his *pre-eminent faith*. The justness of this sentiment, abstractedly considered, is not denied. But was this *the* truth chiefly intended by the apostle in this place? As the words before us are an exact translation of the original, they may be safely depended on, and should be carefully attended to. "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal, &c. *that he might be the father of all them that believe.*" (See a similar phrase used in verse 18.) Now, does not this show, that Abraham's receiving of circumcision, was *in order that he might be the father of all believers*; and does it not imply, that he would not have been their father, in the sense here intended, if he had not received circumcision? Does it not show, that as he was the first who received that rite, so it was his receiving it that *constituted* him their father; and that of course he became the father of all believers, not so much by his faith, as by *covenant relation*, and by receiving the external sign of that covenant; that he thereby became their *federal* father, or their father by federal relation? Such is surely the most natural interpretation of the words, as they stand in our version; and, as has been before remarked, they are correctly translated. Now, then, for the consequence of this, or for the practical bearing of it on a very important subject. If Abraham became, by circumcision, the *federal* father of all believers; in other words, if he sustains a covenant relation *to them all*, then of course *they all* sustain a covenant relation to him. That the Jews ought not to be considered as the only persons interested in this covenant relation, appears from the apostle's saying, "that he might be the father of *all* them that believe, *though they be not circumcised*;" i. e. not of the believing Jews only, but of the believing Gentiles also; for these last are the only persons to whom the words "not circumcised," are

applicable ; all the members of the Jewish Church having been circumcised. I repeat the sentiment, that it may be the more carefully remembered. If Abraham be the covenant father, the federal head of all believers, Gentile as well as Jewish, then all such believers must be in covenant relation *to him*. The discerning reader will instantly see the bearing of this inference on the pedobaptist controversy. If this scripture has been rightly interpreted, it affords stronger evidence than has been usually imagined, of the continued existence of the Abrahamic covenant, and, by necessary consequence, of the propriety, duty, and privilege, of *infant baptism*.

#### CHAP. V, 7.

“ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.”

But why not be as willing to die for the one as for the other ; for are they not both one and the same character ? In reply it may be observed, that as the righteous man and the good man are here manifestly contrasted to each other, so, in the judgment of St. Paul, an inspired apostle, they must have been separate and different beings. It is evident, also, from the manner in which they are here compared—from the greater *sacrifice* which he here supposes one would be willing to make for the good man than for the righteous man—that the good man was considered as the *more excellent* and estimable character. It is granted, that in many parts of scripture, the term righteous, as applied to men, denotes genuine, evangelical piety. But it cannot be so here. By the “righteous man,” therefore, seems intended a *moral man*, or at best one who is blameless touching the righteousness which is of the law ; and by the good man, one of positive and eminent worth and usefulness.

#### VERSE 12.

——“ And so death passed upon all men ; for that all have sinned.”

Expositors have not agreed in their interpretations of this passage. The original may be translated either thus :—‘ On which, whereupon, for that, because, all have sinned ;’ or thus : ‘ In whom all have sinned ;’ for the Greek relative



pronoun here used is the same, in both the masculine and neuter genders, and therefore may refer either to the person, i. e. to the "one man," mentioned in the first part of this verse, or to the thing, reason, cause—cause of the event mentioned immediately before, viz. death's passing upon all men. Some expositors, as Witsius, Henry, &c. say, "In whom (i. e. Adam) all have sinned." This interpretation implies something more, than that we became sinful *in consequence* of Adam's transgression. It implies, and directly means, that we sinned *in* and *with* him, or that his sin was so imputed to us, as to be reckoned *our* sin; so that we are chargeable with the guilt, and liable to the punishment of it, as much as if we personally had committed it. But perhaps it would be sufficient, if, instead of saying that Adam's descendants are guilty of his personal act, in eating the forbidden fruit, we should say only, that they become sinful *in consequence* of that act, and by virtue of a divine constitution, which connected their moral character and state with the conduct of their federal head, while he was on probation in paradise. The author prefers, on the whole, the first of the above mentioned versions of this text, viz: "On which, for that, or because, all have sinned." He supposes that the apostle, in this verse, designed simply to give us an account of the *origin* of sin and death in our world, and that his true meaning herein may be expressed in the following paraphrase, viz:—"Wherefore, as through or by means of one man, Adam, sin entered into the world, and death entered at first, by, through, or in consequence of sin; even so now, death passes upon or must befall all men, for that or because all have sinned." This interpretation, it is true, implies that temporal death is the direct consequence, fruit, or effect, of personal sinning, or personal sinfulness only, and not of the sins of any other one. And that this also is a true sentiment, appears from Ezek. xviii, 20.

#### VERSE 14.

"Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."

The persons here intended are probably *infants*. Of



them it may properly be said, that they have not sinned *after the similitude* of Adam's transgression; i. e. they have not committed *actual* sin, nor have they sinned wilfully and deliberately, as he did. Another interpretation, however, of the phrase, "that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," is proposed by Rosenmuller, viz. that it denotes *actual* transgressors; but then not such as Adam was. Adam sinned against a *positive, express* law of God; but these sinned only against the *law of nature*, and so not as Adam did. Which of these interpretations is the best, let the reader judge.

#### CHAP. VI, 17.

"But GOD be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

As to the first part of this verse, it is evident that the word *whereas*, or *although*, is to be understood; thus:—"GOD be thanked, that although ye were once the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine," &c.; for, surely, it is very absurd to suppose that the benevolent soul of the apostle would have rejoiced; or been thankful, merely because his Roman converts had once been sinful, and of course miserable. In respect to the last clause, it must be observed, that exactly translated, it would read thus:—"Ye have obeyed from the heart, that *form of doctrine into which ye have been delivered.*" The language is metaphorical, and highly expressive. It alludes to melted metals being cast into their respective moulds. As these metals, in consequence of being cast into their moulds, assume of course a shape, a configuration, similar to that of the moulds themselves; so it is with the souls of believers. They are cast, as it were, into the mould of the gospel, and are moulded accordingly. "How forcible are right words," even "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth?"

#### CHAP. VIII, 16.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of GOD."

Whether this scripture ought to be considered as "hard to be understood," or not, it is undeniable that by many it

has not been understood rightly. I refer to the *witness of the Spirit*, here mentioned. This has been understood by some to mean a certain *impulse* on, or suggestion to the mind, (and perhaps both an inexpressible and unaccountable one), that the person receiving it is a child of God. But if we carefully attend to the sense in which the word *witness* is commonly used in the sacred scriptures, we shall find it is not in *this* sense. See as specimens, John v, 36—"But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." Acts xiv, 3—"Long time, therefore, abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony (or bore witness) to the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." Ib. verse 17—"Nevertheless, He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." In all these passages the word *witness* is evidently used as denoting *proof—evidence*. In the same, or in a similar sense, is this word to be understood in the verse before us. The idea is, that the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; not by some sudden and unaccountable suggestion, or impulse, or immediate revelation; but by affording us *evidence, proof* of the matter; evidence of a far different kind from such impulse, suggestion, or immediate revelation; evidence arising from the habitual temper of our minds and tenor of our practice. This evidence, or witness, is then the strongest, when the Spirit of God, acting according to his own holy nature upon our souls, remarkably produces and stirs up within us those holy affections, which are the genuine fruits of the Spirit. These constitute his witness or testimony; and it is then, particularly and eminently, that the believer hath this two-fold witness of his adoption—the "witness in himself," and the "witness of God, which is greater." Have we any thing of this witness?

#### CHAP. IX, 1—4.

"I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great

heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

The third verse, especially, requires explanation. It has been understood by some, and by some distinguished divines too, to mean that St. Paul was willing to be eternally damned, for the sake of the salvation of his countrymen the Jews. If, indeed, such was his spirit, and if his design in this place was to declare it, one of these two conclusions is inevitable. Either, 1, St. Paul did not feel rightly—to say the least, felt enthusiastically, at that time ; or 2, such is the spirit of true Christianity and of true Christians, especially of eminent Christians, like St. Paul ; *they* also, not only ought to feel willing, but do feel willing, to be eternally damned, if thereby they may be made the means of saving their fellow sinners ; and such ought to be the spirit of every Christian, and must be, so far as he is actuated by true christian benevolence. And of course, this may properly be assumed and used as a *test of christian character*, as in fact it has been by some, viz : 'Am I willing, are you willing, to be eternally damned for the glory of God, and for the salvation of our fellow sinners ?' The author has not at present any concern at all with this general question, otherwise than as it may be affected by this text of scripture, which he will endeavor to explain in the best manner he can. It would be of great use, in enabling us to get at the apostle's real meaning in these words, if we could only first determine with certainty to what *period* and *state* of his life he here refers ; whether he here meant to tell us what his views and feelings were *before* his conversion to christianity, or *afterwards*. The general opinion, no doubt, is, that he here meant to tell us what was his state of mind *after* his conversion, and when he wrote this epistle. But 1st, Some learned divines (of whom Dr. Dwight was one) have thought differently. In support of their opinions they alledge, and alledge truly, that the verb *ἠυχόμην*, here used, is in the imperfect tense of the indicative mood, and therefore signifies exactly, "I *did* wish," i. e. while a Pharisee. These divines think also, that the sentence which is the occasion of the whole difficulty, ought to be considered as only parenthetical. Says Dwight,

(ser. 95 of his Theology), “The words rendered *for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ*, ought to be included, as they plainly were intended to be, in a parenthesis.” The whole would then read thus :—“I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart (for I also did wish that myself were accursed from Christ) for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” According to this reading, the phrase, “accursed from Christ,” whatever may be intended by it, has no reference to Paul’s brethren the Jews, as though he had ever wished to be accursed from Christ for them, or on their account; but the whole sentence included in the parenthesis, is designed only to give the reason of what he here so solemnly declares, viz. that he had great heaviness, and continual sorrow of heart, for that people. Or, in other words, according to this reading, the meaning of the whole is, that St. Paul experienced great mental distress on account of his brethren the Jews, in view of their deplorable state of unbelief, and hardness of heart, and violent opposition to Christ and to Christianity. He could, and he did, feel deeply for them on this account, from his own experience; because he himself had been in the same state, when he was “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious;” but he had been since enlightened, to see the guilt, misery, and danger attending that state. *He* also did once, as they did then, wish to be accursed—separated from Christ. This interpretation I mention, merely, as one which has been given by some able divines. Even Dr. Scott, though in the body of his Notes he gives a different one; yet in his critical remarks appended to the Notes, in the last edition of his Commentary, renders the verb *ἠυχόμην* in the past tense of the indicative, and says, “this appears to me the most literal and natural construction of the clause;” though he proposes it, he says, “with great hesitation.” But, 2dly, If this scheme of interpretation should be discarded; if the verb *ἠυχόμην*, though really in the past tense of the indicative, must here be construed as though it were in the Greek optative mood, and so signify, “I could wish,” which is possible, (as instances of a similar kind sometimes occur); if the



clause before mentioned ought not to be included in a parenthesis, and so be considered as an independent sentence, but must be construed as in immediate connection with what follows in the same verse; and if the apostle must be understood as expressing his benevolent views and feelings in respect to the Jews, not while he was a Pharisee, but *after his conversion* to christianity, and at the time he wrote this epistle; still, there is no need of supposing that he here meant to declare in so solemn a manner, his willingness to be eternally damned for their salvation. Let us examine the passage a little more closely.

First, let us inquire what we are to understand by the word *accursed*, in this place? Now, the word in the original is a noun—*ἀνάθεμα*, denoting in general a person or thing accursed, *separated* to destruction; not however always, perhaps not commonly, to destruction in a future world. “This word in the Septuagint, always answers to the Hebrew *CHEREM*, which in like manner denotes, in general, *total separation* from a former state or condition, and particularly, either *things or persons devoted to destruction*.” (Parkhurst.) I may add, that temporal destruction *only*, is the most that the word *CHEREM* signifies usually, perhaps in every instance of its occurrence in the Hebrew bible. Let the Hebrew scholar examine, among a vast multitude of other passages, Deut. vii, 26 : Josh. vi, 17, 18, and vii, 12.

Next, let us inquire into the meaning of the preposition *from*, (Greek, *ἀπο*), as used in this passage. Now, this word, in the original, sometimes signifies *after the example of*, as in 2 Tim. i, 3—“I thank God, whom I serve *from* my forefathers;” i. e. *after the example of* my forefathers. From these remarks, it is evident, that the meaning of the apostle, in this so much controverted passage, *may be*, at most, only this, viz. that for his brethren’s sake—for the promotion of their eternal good—he was willing to be accursed, or devoted to destruction, *after the example of* Christ; i. e. to suffer as he suffered, to be reproached, persecuted, excommunicated, or even crucified, as Christ was, if thereby he might be made the means of saving his brethren the Jews. Yea, on supposition that he here expresses his state of mind while a *Christian*, (as is commonly supposed),



and not while he was a *Pharisee*, such, it is believed, *must* be his meaning, and nothing more. The damnation of the future world includes unrestrained and everlasting enmity against God, as well as mental remorse and corporeal pain. And could St. Paul, who loved God supremely, have felt willing—can any real saint feel willing—to be eternally an enemy to Him? Whether, therefore, St. Paul should be understood as expressing his state of mind before or after his conversion, it is manifest that there is no necessity of concluding that he had here any reference at all to future punishment.

#### CHAP. XI, 24.

“For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive tree,” &c.

In this chapter, in the context especially, the apostle is treating of the future restoration and conversion of the Jews, and of their incorporation with the Gentiles, or rather of the Gentiles' incorporation with them, in an ecclesiastical connection. The Jews and the Gentiles are represented by the metaphor of olive-trees. The Jewish church is said to be the good olive-tree; and the Gentiles, in their pagan state, are called the wild olive-tree. The apostle, speaking to the Roman Gentiles, says, “Thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree.” This language, when divested of all metaphor, evidently means, that the Roman Gentiles had been taken out of their wild, barren, pagan state, or had been delivered from it, and had become incorporated with the real and fruitful church of God; i. e. with God's ancient church, which had been, in essence, continued under the christian dispensation. But let us attend more particularly to the phraseology of the apostle, in verse 24th, that we may see how instructive, and how impressive it is. Now, there is herein an evident allusion to the custom so frequent, as well in ancient as in modern times, of grafting fruit trees. But the particular object of our present attention, is the *manner* in which the apostle describes the grafting of the Gentiles into the stock of God's ancient Israel. This, he says, was “*contrary to nature.*”

1. The *grafting* itself was contrary to nature and custom. For when men graft their trees, their design uniformly is to *improve* their fruit; not only to make the same tree more fruitful, but also to cause it to produce better fruit than it did before. Thus, a scion of a good apple-tree is grafted into a crab apple-tree; but the contrary is not true. Men do not, unless infatuated, or prompted by the mere curiosity of making an useless experiment, graft the scion of a crab-tree into a genuine and good apple-tree. In short, the scion grafted in is always considered as *superior* in quality to the old stock into which it is grafted. But it was not so in the case before us. The Roman Gentiles were cut out of the wild olive-tree. They were the scion of a very bad tree, of a tree that bore no fruit except wild fruit; and *as such* were grafted into a good olive-tree, a tree unspeakably *better* than the parent stock of that scion. There was something, therefore, in the *grafting itself*, which was contrary to nature.

2. The *consequence*, also, of this grafting, was contrary to nature. For after the scion or branch of one tree is grafted into another, it still bears the fruit of the parent stock; but it is not so here. The Gentiles, after their ingrafting into the good olive-tree, bore the fruit, not of their parent stock, not of their old wild olive, but of the good olive-tree *into which they were grafted*. How instructive and impressive, then, is the expression, “grafted contrary to nature,” when abstractedly considered! But it ought not to be considered in this manner merely; for it has an important bearing on a very important subject. This verse, taken even by itself, and especially in connection with the whole paragraph, teaches the essential identity of the two churches—the Jewish and the Christian; or rather, the essential identity of the *church of God* under the Jewish and Christian dispensations. More directly still, it teaches the glorious excellency of this church under the former dispensation. From this passage, and from the whole context, it is evident that the Jewish church was not a mere *civil* community, nor merely an ecclesiastico-political society, as some choose to call it; but a real church of the living God; a good olive-tree, fair, and of goodly fruit. (See Jer. xi,

16.) Such, surely, it was in respect to its constitution, and the divine requirements of all its members, whatever may have been, from time to time, the real character and conduct of most of its members.

#### CHAP. XIV, 5.

“One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

How often has this scripture been misunderstood and misapplied! How often has it been quoted in self-justification, by those who would not “remember the *Sabbath day*, to keep it holy!” How often have such persons referred to it, to show that even St. Paul considered it as a matter of indifference whether any weekly Sabbath were observed by Christians, and by people under the christian dispensation, or not; or to show, at least, that St. Paul would have every man’s practice, as to this matter, regulated by his own *private opinion*, whatever that might happen to be, relative to a weekly christian Sabbath! But, from the connection, it is very evident that the text before us refers not at all to the Lord’s day, or to a weekly Sabbath; but solely to certain *ceremonially* holy days. It should be remembered that the church at Rome was composed partly of Jews, or of those, who, with many remaining Jewish prejudices, yet believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and partly of Gentiles. The Jewish part being still “zealous of the law,” were for observing, in distinction from other days, their *new moons*, their various *feast days*, &c. But the Gentile part believed that the difference in respect to sanctity, which had previously existed between those days and other week days, was annihilated, when Jesus expired on the cross. Hence, then, we have the true and the only meaning of the apostle’s declaration—“One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike.”

#### VERSE 6.

“He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.”

To understand this passage, the above remark, respecting the component parts of the Roman church, must be remembered. The Jewish part of that church conscientiously abstained from the use of certain meats, on the supposition that they were *unclean*, according to the decisions of the Mosaic ritual law. The Gentiles, on the contrary, believed that "to the pure, all things were *pure*." They had no scruples as to the lawfulness and propriety of partaking of those same meats, and accordingly did partake of them as freely as of any others. Now, the apostle here supposes and teaches, that both these sorts of persons acted conscientiously, and according to the light they had; though, of course, they both could not have been correct in their views relative to this subject, because they herein differed from each other. At the same time, the error in question was one of comparatively small importance, and not such as could of itself prevent the acceptance of either party with their God. And the sentiment which the apostle meant to express in this place, is manifestly this, viz:—"Those who ate those meats, ate them "to the Lord," with a view to his glory, giving him thanks for the same, and for their christian liberty; and those who abstained therefrom did it in like manner, "to the Lord," and from a self-denying regard to what they believed to be his will; while, at the same time, they gave him thanks for the blessings which they *did* enjoy."

#### VERSE 22.

"Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God."

How often has this passage been misunderstood, and even perverted to a bad purpose, by such as were "unskilful in the word of righteousness," and wished, perhaps, for some excuse to justify themselves in the neglect of duty, and were unwilling to acknowledge their accountability to God, and to his people, for their faith and practice. Our faith, say they, (whatever it may be), ought to be a personal concern, or at most, a concern between ourselves and our God only; for St. Paul says, "Hast thou faith? have it to *thyself before God*." Sometimes this passage has been perverted in another way, equally, or perhaps much more dangerous and destructive. It has been understood, it



seems, by some, as relating to *experimental* religion, and as a sort of divine prohibition for them to say much, if any thing, to others, about *the state of their minds*, as it respects conviction of sin, or those various moral exercises which are peculiar to the new-born soul. These, say they, are matters between us and our God only. But it is certain that such persons misunderstand St. Paul, in this passage. For it is evident from the connection, that the faith he here intends, is a faith relative to the *same* matters which had been already mentioned, such as days, meats, &c. St. Paul's meaning was, that those of the Roman church, who believed that there was such an important difference between those days, meats, &c. as that some of them were holy, and some unholy, should keep this their faith to themselves, and not trouble with it those of their brethren who thought differently, and who had equally with themselves the right of private judgment. It would be well in these days, if the spirit and meaning of this advice were more regarded by different Christians, in respect to those *non-essential* points in which they differ from each other.

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## I. CORINTHIANS.

### CHAPTER I, VERSE 26.

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.”

There is nothing in the original which answers to the words *are called*, which words are accordingly printed in *italics* in our English version. Some suppose, therefore, and not without reason, from the connection, that the active verb *call* would be as proper, or rather more so; and that the apostle's reference in this passage was not to the *subjects* or recipients of the divine calling, but to the *instruments*, by or through whom the Corinthians had been called. In brief, the precise meaning of the apostle appears to be, as if he had said; ‘Ye see the manner of your calling, brethren; i. e. ye see *who* they are that call you to the faith and fellowship of the gospel. Evidently, they are not men of worldly wis-



dom and persuasive eloquence ; not the mighty ones of the earth ; not those of noble birth. Such are not the persons whom God hath sent to call you. No ; but for this purpose he hath sent us, who are considered by the world as weak, foolish, base, and despicable.’ The whole context seems to justify and require this interpretation. (See particularly verses 25, 27, 28, 29.) It is undoubtedly true, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are effectually called to glory and virtue here, and to eternal life hereafter ; but this does not appear to have been *the* truth intended by the apostle in this place.

#### CHAP. II, 9, 10.

“ But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard ; neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.”

To understand these verses correctly, we must consider them in connection with each other, and with the context. It will hence appear, that the word *man*, in the 9th verse, does not denote man in the generical sense—not what we intend by the term mankind, especially when this term is understood in its most absolute and extensive sense, as denoting the human race universally, and without exception. The apostle did not mean that none of the human race had ever seen and heard, and in some measure understood, the things which God had prepared for them that love him. From the context it is evident, that by *man*, in this passage, the apostle meant man as unenlightened by a special, divine revelation, and as of course unrenewed and carnal. The apostle’s meaning was, that though *such* a man had not seen, nor heard, and could not properly conceive, of “ the good of God’s chosen,” as disclosed in the great plan of redemption, and reserved in heaven for them ; yet to the saints generally, and to the apostles particularly and eminently, this glorious subject had been revealed by the Spirit.

#### CHAP. III, 13.

“ Every man’s work shall be made manifest ; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire ; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”

What can be the meaning of this last clause, "and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is?" It is conceded, I believe, universally, and it is certainly true, that the word *fire* is here used not literally, but figuratively. The effects produced by literal or material fire may be comprehended in these two, viz. purification and destruction. Of the things specified in the context, some are tried and *purified* by fire, as gold and silver; some are *destroyed* by it, as wood, hay, and stubble. In similar ways do fiery trials (1 Pet. iv, 12) operate; and correspondent to these are the effects they produce on different persons. On some persons their effect is to make them the "vessels of mercy fitted for their Master's use" here, and for glory hereafter. Some they prepare for destruction. The fire intended in this passage, may be, in part, the fire of persecution, which, in figurative language, may be called eminently a fiery trial. But the *day of judgment* is particularly referred to, as appears from the preceding part of this same verse:—"Every man's work shall be made manifest; for *the day* shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire." That will indeed be a day of purification to the righteous, and of destruction to the wicked, and of fiery trial to all. (See Malachi iv, 1.) Let us then seriously inquire who of us can abide the scrutinies of that day. O, "who (of us) may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?"

#### CHAP. IV, 4.

"For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

What could the apostle have meant in saying, "I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified?" The general sentiment Paul meant here to express, must have been as follows, viz: that though he knew nothing of evil, by, in, or with himself; i. e. though he was not conscious to himself of guilt in the commission of any known sin, or in the omission of any known duty, whether as a Christian or as an apostle; yet he could not be hereby justified before GOD. If justification could be either absolutely, or, as it were, by the deeds of the law, still, on that ground, something more than a negative righteousness would be necessa-

ry. Pre-eminently then is this the case, on the ground of that divine economy which requires faith, in order to justification; which declares that to the believing sinner, "his faith is counted for righteousness," and which wholly excludes our own legal righteousness from having any agency in justifying us before God.

#### VERSE 15.

"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ; yet have ye not many fathers."

The word in the Greek is *παιδαγωγος*, rendered in Gal. iii, 24, a schoolmaster. Such were the instructors here referred to by the apostle. The word, in its original and literal import, denoted those persons "to whom the care of the boys of a family was committed, who trained them up and formed their manners, attended them at their play, instructed them at home, accompanied them to and from the public school, and when they had grown up, became their companions." (See Robinson's Greek Lexicon.) In general, they were not only very attentive to their pupils, but at times very *severe* also. Hence the propriety of applying this term to the Jewish law, as the apostle does, in Gal. iii, 24. Hence, also, we may discern the contrast, or the difference, which, in the text before us, the apostle meant to express, between those numerous instructors or pedagogues and himself, in respect to the *benefit* which the church at Galatia had received from them respectively, and in respect to the *spirit*, the temper of mind, which they on the one hand, and he on the other, had exercised towards the members of that church. He had been their spiritual *father*, having begotten them through the gospel; but none of them had been such; and as a father, he exercised towards them that *tender* feeling, which was the direct counterpart to that *severity* which those Jewish instructors, that desired to be teachers of the law, as the way of justification and salvation, had exercised and manifested, and which the very nature of the Jewish ritual was so well calculated to cherish.

## CHAP. V, 11.

“But now I have written unto you, not to keep company; if any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat.”

The eating here prohibited appears to be eating at common meals, in distinction from eating at the Lord's table; for,

1. The very phraseology here used seems to require this interpretation. The apostle's direction, in respect to the treatment of this corrupt person, was two-fold—general and particular. The general direction was, “not to keep company” with him. The particular direction was, “no, not to eat.” Now here is evidently a descent from the greater to the less. From the very phraseology of the apostle, then, it appears that the least or lowest kind of association and intercourse is here intended. But certainly, eating at the Lord's table is one of the highest expressions and acts of christian intercourse and communion; or rather the very highest, in some respects, that ever takes place here on earth.

2. That eating at common meals is here intended, appears “yet far more evident,” from comparing the passage with Mat. xviii, 17; a text, which, equally with the one now under consideration, relates to a professing Christian, or to a man that once was such, and in good standing in the church; but who has since, for his sins, been disowned by the church, and excluded from their communion. Christ's direction in this last passage is—“If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” It is well known that the Jews, in our Lord's time, would not eat at common meals with publicans, and sinners, and heathens. They considered it as wrong so to do. Hence they found fault with Christ, because that though a Jew, he ate with publicans and sinners. Now, as the corrupt, and irreclaimable, and excommunicated brother, was to be treated as an heathen man and a publican, i. e. as the Jews treated heathens and publicans, and as the Jews would not eat with them at common meals; so the course to be pursued by church members, in respect to excommunicated persons, seems plain, viz: that they ought not (in ordinary

cases) even to eat with them at common meals, until they repent and return to duty. I say, in *ordinary cases*; because there are exceptions to this rule, in favor of near relatives and connections, as husbands and wives, parents, children, &c. For in their case, prior obligations exist; obligations arising from their peculiar relation to each other; obligations, too, which christianity never was designed to cancel, but rather to illustrate and enforce.

#### CHAP. VI, 4.

“If, then, ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge, who are least esteemed in the church.”

The inquiry is, who are meant by those *least esteemed in the church*? It should be observed, that the original word here rendered least esteemed, properly signifies *despised*. Accordingly, it is sometimes rendered despised; sometimes set at nought. (See Luke xviii, 9, and xxiii, 11: Rom. xiv, 3: Acts iv, 11.) In short, in other passages where it occurs, it usually conveys a *bad* meaning, and is at the same time strongly expressive of that meaning. It appears, at any rate, a very improper word to be applied by Christians to their christian brethren. For this reason, as well as from the general scope of the context, it is presumable, that by the least esteemed or despised, St. Paul intended *heathen magistrates*. Accordingly, by Whitby and some of the best critics, and in Griesbach's edition of the New Testament, this verse is read interrogatively, thus:—“If, then, ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, do ye set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church?” And this appears well to suit the main argument of the apostle. For in the context, he treats upon the subject of Christians going to law one with another, and reproves them, if not absolutely for going to law, yet for going to law before *unbelievers*, i. e. unbelieving magistrates. (Verses 1—6.) He argues from the greater to the less, thus:—‘If the saints are counted worthy to judge the world, and angels too, i. e. to be assessors with Christ in the general judgment; then, certainly, they are qualified to judge upon and decide worldly matters.’ And in verse 5th, he expresses his astonishment and regret,



that there should not be a wise man among them, who should be able to judge between his brethren, in their unhappy differences and disputes about worldly matters. And as in verse 4th, he is evidently upon the same subject, and administering the same reproof; so it would be very natural to understand him here as saying, ‘If, then, ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, do ye indeed set heathen magistrates to judge; those who are least esteemed in or by the church; men, who, as to their moral characters, are generally least esteemed, and often despicable?’ The main point at which the apostle aimed, in the whole of this exposition, was to prevent the Corinthians from going to law with one another before heathen magistrates, and to prevail on them to refer their differences to an arbitration of their christian brethren for adjustment.

#### CHAP. VII, 14.

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.”

Our chief concern, at present, is with the last clause of this verse, “Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” What can be the meaning of this expression? Especially, what did the apostle intend by the term *holy* in this place? To prepare the way for an answer, it should be observed, that in the Greek language, (wherein the New Testament was originally written), there are two words, both which are in our tongue rendered holy. These are, *οςιος*, and *αγιος*. The primary and proper import of the former, when applied to persons or moral agents, is, according to Schleusner, true godliness. “*Significat* (says he) *sanc-tum, pium erga Deum, integrum vitæ, verum De cultorem, purum a vetiositate.*” The word occurs, if the author has rightly computed, only eight times in the New Testament, viz. in Acts ii, 27, and xiii, 34, 35: Heb. vii, 26: 1 Tim. ii, 8: Titus i, 8: Rev. xv, 4, and xvi, 5; and in five of these instances it clearly means as above defined. It denotes, properly, a mental quality; internal, moral excellence; or in a word, it properly denotes what we commonly intend by the term holiness. And sometimes (as it cor-

responds to the Hebrew word *CHASID*) it denotes particularly the exercises of godliness, as they respect the *indigent* and *miserable*; and when used in this application, it signifies *humane, benign, merciful, &c.* But *ἅγιος* is more general in its signification. In very many, or most of those instances, wherein it occurs in the Greek New Testament, and in the Septuagint version of the Old, it certainly cannot denote either internal moral excellence, or any moral quality at all. For it is applied to Jerusalem, Mat. iv, 5; to the temple, Micah i, 2; to the mount of transfiguration, 2 Pet. i, 18; to the camp of Israel, Deut. xxiii, 14; to the ground where Moses stood, Ex. iii, 5; to the anointing oil for the tabernacle, Ex. xxx, 25; to the vessels of the sanctuary, 1 Chron. xxii, 19; to Aaron's garments, Ex. xxviii, 2, &c. Let the Greek scholar examine the above texts, as they stand in the Septuagint and Greek Testament. True, it is sometimes the case, that intelligent beings, to whom this word is applied, *are* holy, in the spiritual sense of that term; and in some cases, the word itself, as applied to them, may directly denote such a quality. But this is not the primitive and original sense of the word. Its original and proper signification is, *separation* from a general to a particular, from a common to a special use; or, as it respects things of religion, it denotes dedication, consecration to the service of God, or a being set apart for his service and worship. And this, let it be remembered, is the word used in this place, "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy;" where, by the way, holy is opposed to unclean; and hence we derive additional evidence, that the word means in this place as above explained. For the term *unclean*, as used by the Jews, denoted generally what was *not fit to be offered to God*. How natural, then, to understand holy in this passage, as denoting what *is fit to be offered, consecrated, dedicated to Him!* If, then, the children of professing believers are holy in this sense—are fit to be set apart for God, and dedicated to him, is it not proper that they should receive the distinguishing badge of such dedication? Who, then, can forbid water, that they should not be *baptised*? Schleusner's comment on the words, "but now are they holy," is, "*Jam vero habentur membra ecclesiæ chris-*

*lianæ;*” i. e. but now are they accounted members of the christian church. Whether this comment be allowed to express exactly the sense of the apostle, or not, it seems, at least to the author, impossible to invent any consistent or reasonable interpretation of this passage, but what will favour the cause of infant baptism.—Some say the word holy here means *legitimate*. Now, of such persons as can say so seriously, I would ask—Have you ever considered the implication of this, or the consequence that must follow, if your interpretation be correct? A strict and candid attention to the whole verse must evince, that whatever be the import of the term holy, as here used, it is applicable to the children of believers *only*; or that no other children than those of believers are holy, in the sense here intended. For the only reason here mentioned by St. Paul, why these children are holy, is, that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by (or to) the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by (or to) the husband; “else,” says he, (i. e. otherwise, were it not for this reason), your children would be unclean; but now are they holy.” Since, then, this is the only reason why these children are called holy; on supposition that holy itself means legitimate, the conclusion is, that where this reason does not exist; i. e. where the unbelieving husband is not sanctified by the wife, nor the unbelieving wife by the husband; or, in other words, when neither of the parents is a believer, their children must necessarily be *illegitimate*!! But, depraved as the world is, such a conclusion is wholly inadmissible, because it is contrary to fact. Still, as it so directly follows from the above mentioned construction of this text, we must either adopt the conclusion, or discard the construction itself. Which of these two things must be done, “judge ye.”

#### VERSE 25.

“Now, concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.”

Hence, it seems, some have inferred that Paul was not always under inspiration, when he wrote his epistles, but contented himself, at times, with the delivery of his own in-

dividual opinion ; that, to be sure, such was the case in respect to this passage. As to this inference, it is natural to remark, that on supposition of its justness, we ought to conclude that Paul was of course under inspiration, (at least in his own opinion), in all those other parts of his writings wherein he does not express any hesitancy as to this matter. But the truth is, all St. Paul meant was simply this, viz. that in respect to virgins, the Lord had not seen fit to give him any express directions, as he had done in respect to a man's putting away his wife, and a wife's putting away her husband. Surely, we are not to conclude that the apostle was not under inspiration, merely because such inspiration did not extend to *every* conceivable subject.

#### VERSE 36.

“ But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not ; let them marry.”

To prevent needless questions and scruples relative to this passage of scripture, it may be observed, that its meaning, evidently, from the context, is this :—‘ If a man have a virgin-daughter, or any other virgin-maiden, under his care, that is marriageable, and disposed to marry, and circumstances on the whole render it expedient and best that she should be married ; let such a father or guardian do what he will in reference to her ; i. e. let him, if he pleases, *give her in marriage* to some suitable companion. He does not sin in so doing. Let them marry ; i. e. let her and him whom her father or guardian has provided for her, and whom she has chosen as her companion, become one in the conjugal state.’ To marry, or to *be* married, is one thing ; to *give in marriage*, is another. It is of the last, only, that the apostle treats in this verse, and also in verses 37 and 38 of the same chapter.

#### CHAP. IX, 24—26.

“ Know ye not, that they which run in a race, (i. e. in the stadium, or circus), run all, but one receiveth the prize ? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now, they do it to

obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I, therefore, so run not as uncertainly."

These verses manifestly refer to the races performed at the Isthmian games in Greece. Though to some of them several prizes might have been assigned, and of different value; yet to that here referred to there belonged only one. The hope of winning it stimulated alike each of the racers; and that they might "not run in vain," they had previously habituated themselves to the strictest temperance, as to eating and drinking, and every article of sensual indulgence. But after all, the prize in view, if obtained, would be of very little service or value; for it was only a crown or garland of leaves. Nevertheless, from those races the apostle drew spiritual instruction. As often as he witnessed them, he resolved that he would "run the race set before him," with at least equal agility and vigour; and, that he might run not as uncertainly, would habituate his body to at least equal temperance and subjection; and he here exhorts his Corinthian converts, and through them all Christians, to do so likewise. How important it is for us, like the apostle, to derive spiritual instruction from natural objects! How important not to be outdone in our pursuit of the prize of our high calling, by the men of the world, in their pursuit of earthly treasures! How grateful should we be, that though only *one* could obtain the prize, in the case here referred to by the apostle, *all* Christians, who run with patience the race set before them, may and will obtain the heavenly prize! But how necessary it is we should remember, that as the prize in question would be awarded to the candidate only at the end of the race-ground; at the *further goal*; so it is only to those who persevere in the christian race until the *end of life*, that the incorruptible crown will be given.

#### CHAP. X, 20.

"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God."

In the Greek, it is *δαίμονις*, to demons—false, fictitious gods, says Rosenmuller, in his comment on the passage. There are in the original three words, which, by our translators are rendered devil, and in the plural devils, viz. *διαβολος*, *δαίμων*, and *δαίμονιον*. The former of these commonly



denotes the fallen angels, and still more commonly the arch-apostate, Satan. Sometimes, however, when used in the plural number, the word is applied to human beings, as in 1 Tim. iii, 11—"Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers," Greek, *μη διαβόλους*. (See also 2 Tim. iii, 3, and Titus ii, 3.) The word properly signifies a false accuser, or slanderer, and when the singular article is prefixed, (as *ο διαβόλος*,) it denotes Satan. *Δαίμωνων* and *δαιμονιον* are nearly synonymous, and convey, each of them, a somewhat different meaning from *διαβόλος*. With respect to *δαιμονιον*—the word now under consideration, the word used in the passage before us—as used by the heathens, it signified generally an intermediate class of spirits, whose rank in the scale of being was supposed to be in a sort of medium between God and man; and sometimes, also, it signified the departed, deified spirits of good and virtuous men. But though by heathen writers the term is frequently used in a good sense; i. e. good in their sense of goodness; yet in the New Testament it is invariably used in a bad sense, with the exception, perhaps, of Acts xvii, 18, where the same word in the Greek occurs, and is there translated *gods*. If now the inquiry be, what is the direct meaning of the scripture before us, "I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, (demons), and not to God;" the best reply appears to be this:—It means, that though in offering their sacrifices, they might have designed to offer them to demons, in *their* sense of the term; i. e. either to an intermediate class of beings between Jehovah and men, or to the departed deified spirits of illustrious men; yet that in reality they offered them to evil spirits—*evil* demons; for such, in the christian sense, most or all of their demons, even the best of them, were.

#### CHAP. XI, 5.

"But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoureth her head."

From the connection it is evident, that by "her head," in this last instance, is intended the man, the woman's husband. If a woman should appear and pray and prophesy in a public assembly, with her head and face uncovered or unveiled,

she would thereby dishonor her husband. She would dishonor herself, as she would not appear with that decorum (verse 13) which was proper for her sex ; and by dishonoring herself, she must of course dishonor her husband. She would dishonor her husband, also, as she would thereby affect that masculine appearance, (verse 7), that precedence and authority, which it could not be for the credit, either of herself to assume, or of her husband to permit. (See the comment on the next passage.)

### VERSE 10.

“For this cause, ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels.”

The word power, in this place, evidently refers to the veil or covering which the woman wore on her head. Such in ancient times was the custom among the Greeks, Romans, and Jews, when they appeared in worshipping assemblies. This covering, as worn by the women in apostolic times, was a token both of their modesty, and of their subjection to their husbands. But what are we to understand by the expression “because of the angels?” Though the scriptures use the word *angels* in various senses, and sometimes intend thereby mere men, (see Rev. ii, 1, 8, 12, 18, &c.) ; yet the most natural interpretation of the term in this place is, that it denotes not human spies, as some think, but those celestial beings who are usually intended by the term angels. And the apostle appears here to teach, by implication, that they are occasionally, though of course invisibly, present in the worshipping assemblies of Christians, to observe whether the due order and spirituality are there maintained, as well as to assist in their devotions. What an awful motive, by the way, is this, for us to keep our *hearts*, as well as our feet, when we go to the house of God !

### VERSES 14, 15.

“Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him ? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her, for her hair is given her for a covering.”

As nature or custom (see Schleusner on the place) does not seem to teach *us*, in these days, much on this subject, one way or the other, this is one of the numerous passages whose literal meaning cannot be rightly understood, without some knowledge of oriental customs. Sir J. Chardin, speaking of the people of Asia, says—"The men are shaved, (only one lock of their hair excepted); the women nourish their hair with great fondness, which they lengthen by tresses and tufts of silk, drawn down to the heels." The customs of the Asiatics change but seldom; and this custom, with many others mentioned in the Bible, continues among them until this day.

#### VERSE 28.

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

The word δοκιμάζω, here translated examine, properly signifies to try, prove, or examine a thing, in respect to its *quality* or nature; to ascertain whether it be genuine or not. In its original and literal acceptation, it was applied to metals, such as silver, gold, &c. These were cast into the fire, and thus were δοκιμαζόμενοι, i. e. tried, in order that it might appear whether they were, or how much of them was, pure, genuine gold or silver, and how much dross. True, the word in this passage is used figuratively, but evidently with an allusion to its primary and literal import. Hence, then, we have the true meaning of St. Paul in this place. It was not, as some have supposed, that the Corinthians should examine themselves in respect to their *needs* only, or chiefly; but it was that they should examine, try, prove themselves, in respect to *character*, that they might know what manner of spirit they were of; in other words, whether they were true, genuine believers or not; and if, in the result, it should appear that they were, how much pure, genuine religion they had, how much of the "gold tried in the fire," and how much dross. (See 1 Pet. i, 7.) It is obvious, then, that in the scripture before us, it is implied that real piety is an indispensable pre-requisite to such a partaking of the sacrament, as is either acceptable to the Lord, or beneficial to the communicant.

## VERSE 29.

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”

It is well known that this verse has been the occasion of much disquietude and distress, in the minds of many sincere, but weak believers. It is probable that an erroneous view of it has kept away from the Lord’s table many, who ought by all means to have approached it. Hence, it is very important that the passage should be rightly understood. And for this purpose it should be observed and remembered, that the word *κρίμα* properly signifies *judgment*, merely, though sometimes it signifies *condemnation*, or adjudication to punishment. (See Luke xxiii, 40, and xxiv, 20 : Rom. iii, 8, and xiii, 2, &c.) Sometimes, indeed, the word seems to denote punishment, of some kind or other, as in Gal. v, 10 : Mat. xxiii, 14 : 1 Pet. iv, 17 : Rev. xvii, 1. It is obvious, however, that in neither of these passages, does it signify, primarily or properly, the punishment of hell, which is what we usually intend by the word damnation. Nor was this the thing intended in the verse before us. Thus much at least may be concluded from the previous remarks. To these we may add, that the eating and drinking unworthily at the Lord’s table, is not the unpardonable sin. What that is, see Mat. xii, 32. The meaning of the passage then must be this :—‘He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, i. e. without the requisite desires and fitness of character, (see Mat. xxii, 8), eateth and drinketh judgment or condemnation to himself.’ He is herein, and for so doing, judged and condemned, not only by his own conscience, if it be properly enlightened and unbiassed, but by the Judge of all the earth. His sin is doubtless great, though not “a sin unto death;” not a sin that seals, or is necessarily connected with, the future and eternal damnation of the soul, as some very erroneously seem to have supposed, from this passage. Hence, he may be forgiven, and will be, if penitent.

## CHAP. XII, 7.

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal.”

This scripture has been sometimes brought along with some others, to prove that there is in every individual of mankind, some spark or portion of divine light, which, if faithfully cultivated and improved, will insure his eternal salvation, in opposition to the sentiment generally considered orthodox, viz. that we are by nature in a state of total, spiritual darkness. But when thus used, it is evidently wrested from its primary and proper meaning. Rightly to understand this text of scripture, we must remember that the apostle is here treating of the *gifts* of the Spirit. Between these and the *graces* or *fruits* of the Spirit, mentioned in Gal. v, 22, there is a great difference; as great, indeed, and the same as there is between *disposition* and *ability*—between holy affections of heart, and the power, capacity, or ability of performing such and such outward acts. The former, the gifts of the Spirit, are excellent, and ought to be earnestly coveted, (verse 31); but the latter are more excellent than they, as the apostle observes, (verse 31), and proceeds to illustrate at large, in the article of charity or love, (chap. xiii, 1, *ad finem.*) Now, that it was only of spiritual *gifts* the apostle was here speaking, a bare attention to his argument must convince us. For observe, that as a proof, or rather instance of the truth of what he had said in verse 7, he immediately says, “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another faith, (some miraculous or extraordinary faith, probably), by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.” The above quotations show, moreover, that in verse 7, St. Paul referred not only to the gifts of the Spirit exclusively, but also, in a great measure, to *such* gifts as were bestowed in the apostolic age, and in primitive times; for evidently some of the gifts above enumerated, were peculiar to that age, and to those times.

#### CHAP. XIII, 1.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal,” &c.



The word charity, as commonly used and understood among men, denotes *liberality to the poor and needy*; a munificent disposition, a disposition to supply their wants, especially their bodily wants; and from signifying the cause, it has been used to signify the effect, also, viz. munificence itself. Thus, he who feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, relieves the distressed, and does these things gratis, is called a charitable man. Sometimes, also, the word is used to signify a disposition to *think favorably* of our fellow men, in regard to their spiritual state and another world. Hence, he who believes that people of different religious sentiments and communions may be equally safe, in regard to another world and eternal happiness, is by many considered and called a charitable person. Their meaning is, such a person is not bigoted, but liberal in his views and feelings—charitable, in this sense. And perhaps some may think that the Universalist is of all men the most charitable, because he believes that *all* men will be finally saved, whatever their religious sentiments or moral conduct in this world may have been. But the charity of the New Testament signifies, strictly speaking, neither of these. Its corresponding term in the original is ἀγάπη, i. e. love, holy love. Such is the precise signification of the word. So our translators have commonly rendered it; and why they have not thus rendered it uniformly, I cannot explain in any other way than this; that in their time, these two words, charity and love, were synonymous, and of course interchangeable; which very possibly might have been the case then, but which we know is not the case now. This scriptural charity, this holy, divine love, doubtless *includes* a generous kindness towards the poor and needy, and will lead to the outward expressions of such a temper, in attempts to supply their wants, and to relieve them in their distresses. If our supposed benevolence does not produce beneficence, and if, moreover, it does not lead to that particular species of it which was last mentioned, it certainly cannot be true or genuine benevolence; for, “whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1st Epis. John, iii, 17.) Again, this same blessed

temper *includes* a disposition to think favorably of others, so far as known circumstances will permit; for "charity (love) thinketh no evil," unreasonably or unnecessarily. Still, be it remembered, this scriptural charity is something *more* than either or both of these. It is *love*, holy and divine love, that love which is "the fruit of the Spirit," and which only is the "fulfilling of the law." Before I close my remarks on this passage, I would just observe, it plainly implies, (particularly when connected with the two succeeding verses), that the possessing of many excellent and uncommon *gifts* is compatible with the utter want of holy love, as every attentive reader must perceive. How important, then, that we should distinguish between the mere *gifts* and the *graces* of the Spirit, and closely examine ourselves in regard to our *moral* character? For though a man should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, &c., if he has not charity or *divine love*, he is nothing in the view of the great Omniscient, but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Therefore, while we may "covet earnestly the best gifts," in order that we may be the more useful to our fellow men in those stations wherein Providence has placed us respectively, let us attend yet more earnestly to this "more excellent way."

#### VERSE 13.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

But how or why is charity, or love, greater than faith and hope! In several particulars love has the pre-eminence. That we may, however, adhere as closely as possible to the reasoning of the apostle, I shall here mention only one, viz. duration. The superlative excellency of love consists in this; it "never faileth." This cannot truly be said of the mere *gifts* of the Spirit, as possessed in the present world; for "whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." (Verse 8.) Nor can this be said of faith and hope. Faith will hereafter be turned into sight, and hope into enjoyment; but "charity never faileth," it will last forever.

## CHAP. XIV, 1.

“Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.”

The word prophesy, according to Johnson and Walker, signifies primarily and properly, “to predict, to foretell, to prognosticate, to foreshow.” Such is the signification assigned to it by common consent, and by common practice, which governs chiefly in regard to the use of language. But this cannot be the meaning of the word, as used in many parts of scripture, and particularly in the verse before us, and frequently in other parts of this chapter. The usual scriptural sense of this word is, *to preach*, as is justly remarked by the above mentioned lexicographers. The general meaning of the word, as used in this chapter, clearly is, “to explain scripture, and publicly to discourse of divine things, in an instructive and edifying manner.” (Doddridge.) In verse 4, prophesying is opposed to speaking in an unknown tongue. “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth, edifieth the church.” The antithesis or contrast here expressed, implies, that by prophesying, the apostle meant not only instructing the people, by explaining divine truth to them, but also doing this in a very *plain manner*, and very *intelligibly*, so that the Corinthians might not be to their brethren like one that spake in an unknown language, or unintelligibly. The prophesying in the apostolic age, was usually delivered, it seems, by divine inspiration. In conclusion, it is very natural, and seems very important, to remark, how vastly preferable, in the judgment of an inspired apostle, are the *useful* to the merely *brilliant* talents, in every public teacher! Though St. Paul could speak with tongues, more than all the Corinthians, and felt thankful to his God that he could do so; yet in the church he had rather speak five words with his understanding, that he might thereby teach others also, and thus be useful to them, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (See verses 18, 19.)

## CHAP. XV, 22.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Among the texts brought by the Universalists in defence of their peculiar tenet, this, it is well known, always holds a prominent place. The import of it, as they understand, or pretend to understand it, amounts to this :—‘As in Adam all are *lost*, so in Christ all are *saved*.’ It needs but a little knowledge of human nature, especially of our innate and strong desire for happiness, to be satisfied that such an interpretation would be very gratifying to us all, to the antagonists of the Universalists, as well as to the Universalists themselves, provided only we could see it to be a *just* interpretation. But if we candidly and carefully examine the context, and in so doing allow ourselves to be guided by our judgment, and not by our selfish feelings, we cannot avoid the conclusion, that this very welcome interpretation is by no means admissible. It is evident that the main subject treated of in this chapter, is the literal resurrection, the resurrection of the *body*; and the main proof of this interesting article of our faith, that is here insisted on, is the resurrection of Christ. (See from verse 4 to verse 23.)—Though other matters are mentioned in this chapter, yet that a resurrection of some sort or other is its principal subject, is undeniable. The only question is, what sort of a resurrection is it, a literal or a spiritual one? That the resurrection of the *body* is the precise point treated of by the apostle, both *before* and *after* the verse now under consideration, none who will understand his words according to the common acceptance of language, can reasonably question. (See before it, verses 12, 13, 15, 16.) See after it, verse 35—“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what *body* do they come?” and verse 44—“It is sown a natural *body*, it is raised a spiritual *body*.” As, then, both before and after verse 22, the resurrection of the *body* is clearly the subject of discussion, and as nothing in the immediate context forbids our understanding the same as being meant there also, it seems that by the usual and authorised rules of interpretation, we are obliged to understand the apostle as referring in this 22d verse, to the literal death, and the literal resurrection, only. Besides, the argument here used by the apostle, viz. that drawn from the resurrection of Christ, would not be suitable to his purpose, unless

the resurrection treated of in this chapter were that of the body; for the resurrection of Christ was a corporeal, literal resurrection, a resurrection of the body. How, then, could it be called the *first fruits* or pledge of them that slept, or of their resurrection, unless the resurrection of their bodies were meant? The meaning, therefore, of St. Paul, in this verse, appears to be as if he had said, ‘As in Adam all die a natural death, so in Christ, or in consequence, and by virtue of his resurrection, they all shall arise from their graves, and thus literally be made alive again;’ that thereby, and in their perfect man, consisting of soul and body then reunited, they may be fully prepared to be judged according to their works. This is in substance the interpretation adopted by Henry, McKnight, and Scott. If St. Paul referred at all in this passage, and in the context, to a spiritual death, and a spiritual resurrection, and to Adam and Christ as federal heads, and as sources, the one of spiritual death, and the other of spiritual life, to mankind; then his meaning must have been thus:—‘As in Adam all his seed (which are all mankind) die morally or spiritually—become dead in trespasses and sins; so in Christ, the other federal head, all his seed (i. e. all true believers) shall be made spiritually alive! Whichsoever of these interpretations be adopted, this text, it is easily seen, affords no aid to the cause of universalism.

#### VERSE 24.

“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.”

For the explanation and correct understanding of this very significant text, it should be observed and remembered, that the scriptures appear in some places to distinguish between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ. They are both the same in respect to their general nature; so they are in respect to their grand ultimate object, which is the universal extension and complete triumph of truth and righteousness. But yet, in respect to *administration* and *duration*, there may be said to be a difference. The Son administers by a delegated and derived, the Father by an underived power. The kingdom of the Father is to be strictly and ab-



solutely everlasting ; the kingdom of the Son, *as such*, is to continue only until “ he shall have subdued all enemies under his feet.” (What that means, see the comment on the next verse.) He will then deliver up his kingdom to God, even the Father ; and this kingdom will ever afterwards be the Father’s. And it may be for the arrival of that great event, that grand consummation in the moral world, when Christ shall gather together the whole multitude of the redeemed, and shall present them to his Father, and when, of course, his mediatorial reign shall cease, as being no longer necessary, and shall be absorbed in that of the Father, so that God may be “ all in all”—I say, it may be for the arrival of that great event, at least, in part, that our Saviour directs us to pray, in the petition to the Father, “ *thy* kingdom come.” The circumstance, however, that Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, is perfectly consistent both with his being properly a divine person, and with his officiating forever and ever as the Father’s vicegerent in administration. The subordination of the Son, predicted in verse 28, may be simply *official* ; and official subordination may well consist with essential equality. By the way, this text disproves universalism, i. e. the restoration scheme. For that scheme supposes (see Chancey and Winchester) that some sinners will be found impenitent at the great day, and will, as such, be then adjudged by Christ Jesus to the second death, which, they allow, will continue for ages of ages. The advocates for the restoration scheme contend, however, that when those same sinners shall have suffered the pains of the second death, they will be delivered from their gloomy prison, and admitted to heaven ; or if (what they allow to be possible) some of them shall still stand it out, and continue so unreasonably obstinate, as that they will need and must endure still further punishment in another state of trial, yet that they will all eventually be saved. But how inconsistent with such a doctrine is the text before us ! By the end mentioned in this text, must be intended, the end of the world, the day of judgment. By the kingdom to be then delivered up, the mediatorial kingdom is unquestionably intended. If Christ will then deliver up his kingdom, of course he will no longer act as Media-

tor ; and if so, then, obviously, no sinners can ever be saved *by him* after the day of judgment. Can they be saved by any other person, or in any other way? Let the word of God answer :—"Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv, 12.)

#### VERSE 25.

"For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

How frequently and how triumphantly have these words been brought forward in aid of the universalian cause ; but manifestly with no reason. The phrase 'putting under one's feet,' does not necessarily, nor even naturally, denote a moral, cordial, willing subjection. When the captains of Israel, in obedience to the command of Joshua, (ch. x, 24), put their feet upon the necks of the five kings of Canaan, they did not thereby bring them into *cordial* subjection to Joshua's government, nor into cordial affection to his person. But mark the sense in which this phrase is used in other places of scripture. See as a specimen, Ps. viii, 4—8—"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands ; thou hast put all things under his feet." But certainly this phrase, "under his feet," as here used by David, cannot denote a moral, cordial, willing subjection. For the Psalmist proceeds to mention, "all sheep and oxen, yea, the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea," as among the all things subjected to man. But as these animals are not moral agents, so of course they are not capable of moral subjection. All, therefore, the Psalmist meant was, that those animals were subjected to man's *dominion*, so that they would be afraid of him, be under his control, and acknowledge him as their *lord* and *ruler*. In like manner, but not otherwise, can it be said with truth, that *all* Christ's enemies shall be put under his feet.

## VERSE 29.

“Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead?”

Of this difficult text several interpretations have been given. Some have supposed that the phrase, “for the dead,” means for their dead things. It is acknowledged that the adjective or adjective-noun here used, may be in either the masculine, feminine, or *neuter* gender, according to circumstances, and the exigency of the case. But yet, what rational or definite meaning can be attached to the expression, *dead things*, it is difficult to conceive. Some have supposed that St. Paul, in this passage, refers to a custom supposed to exist in his time, viz. of some being baptised, (with water), in the place, stead, or room, and for the benefit of others, who were dead, and who had died without having received that ordinance. But as it is questionable whether such a custom ever existed in the christian church, and as the intrinsic folly of the custom itself, seems to forbid even the supposition that it could well exist in the luminous age of the apostles; so that interpretation of the passage, which is built on this hypothesis, must be relinquished. It remains, then, that we exhibit what appears to be the true meaning of the passage; and for this purpose, it is necessary to explain the import of the Greek terms used in the expression, “baptised for the dead.” The word βαπτίζω (baptise) is used in at least three senses in the scriptures. Its first and most common reference is to that outward ordinance, or christian *sacrament*, called baptism. As understood in this sense, it signifies to immerse or wash with water. (See Mat. iii, 16: Luke vii, 29: John iii, 23: Acts ii, 38, and x, 47.) Again, the word signifies sometimes the operations, the influences of the Holy Spirit; and as used in this acceptation, it is called *spiritual* baptism. (See in illustration, Mat. iii, 11: Acts xi, 16.) Once more, the word sometimes denotes *sufferings*; commonly extreme sufferings; sufferings nigh unto death; as in Mark x, 38: Luke xii, 50. Now, in respect to the passage before us, it would make good sense, if the word βαπτίζομενοι were understood, in either of the above mentioned senses. The first,

however, seems on the whole preferable to either of the other two; chiefly, because it is in the New Testament, the most common sense of the term. The preposition *υπερ*, here translated *for*, properly signifies *in the place*, or room of. (See Rom. v, 8, 11: 2 Cor. v, 14, 15: 1 Pet. ii, 21, and iii, 18.) The words *των νεκρων*, translated the dead, relate to *persons*, and not inanimate things, and must here denote those persons who had died, in the literal sense. The meaning of this passage, then, may be expressed in the following paraphrase:—‘Else what shall they do, who, in token of their receiving the christian faith, are baptised (with water) in the room or as the successors of the dead; of those Christians who have either died in the natural way, or have suffered martyrdom, if the dead rise not at all? And why, if there be no resurrection, and if they be not firmly persuaded of it—why do they so readily step into the ranks of Christ’s fallen soldiers; thereby taking their room, and supplying their place, and thus exposing themselves to similar sufferings and a similar death?’ Surely, if there be no resurrection, and no future state of rewards, they would be very foolish in so doing; in thus depriving themselves of the pleasures of this life, and exposing themselves to so many hardships, and even to a violent and cruel death.

## II. CORINTHIANS.

### CHAPTER II, VERSE 14—16.

“Now, thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.”

The word *θριαμβέω*, here rendered *causeth to triumph*, occurs also in Col. ii, 15, where it is rendered *triumphing over*. The apostle may be understood as giving thanks to God, either because He had triumphed over his pharisaic pride and obstinate temper, by the renewing and sanctifying agency of his Holy Spirit, and had made both himself and

his fellow apostles, *as individuals*, the trophies of his grace ; or rather, (as the English version implies, and as the two following verses most directly show), because He had made him and the other apostles triumphant, *as such*, by crowning their labors with such signal success. In these three verses, the apostle is supposed to allude to a practice among the Romans, which was this :—When their generals returned as conquerors from a successful campaign, they were accompanied by some distinguished persons, whom they had taken as captives. When they entered the capital city, the streets were paved with roses, and other things of a sweet odour. Of their captives some were pardoned and allowed to live, and some were put to death. To the former these sweet smelling roses were reviving indeed ; they were a savour of life ending in life, of prolonged life. To the latter, also, they were reviving at first ; but the revival was short ; it was like the revival before death, a sort of death-revival, rather threatening than otherwise. In short, to them these same sweet smelling roses were a savour of death unto death. The main spiritual instruction of the whole appears to be this, viz : that the same odoriferous and blessed gospel, or the scheme of truth therein taught, produces very different effects on different hearers, even as the beams of the sun do on wax and clay. Some it softens, and some it hardens. Some the truth “prepares unto glory,” and some it ripens for-destruction. And in either case, the effects produced will be according to the dispositions of the persons, and the manner in which they treat the messages of reconciliation. How important, then, the admonition, “Take heed how ye hear !”

#### VERSE 17.

“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God ; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.”

Κακηλεύω, of which the participle is here used, and translated corrupt, literally means to *adulterate*, as a dishonest vintner or tavern-keeper does his wines and other costly liquors. Accordingly, the word, or a noun of the same root, is found used by the LXX, in this literal sense, in their



translation of Isa. i, 22. In our version it runs thus :—  
 “Thy silver is become dross ; thy wine mixed with water ;”  
 which is indeed an exact translation from the Hebrew. But  
 in the Septuagint, it is exactly thus :—“Thy vintners min-  
 gle the wine with water.” In the text before us, the word  
 is used metaphorically, in application to the word of God,  
 and denotes adulterating that word. Liquors may be adul-  
 terated in two ways ; by infusing into them certain ingredi-  
 ents, to give them a good colour, an agreeable taste, and a  
 better relish, but which are in their nature *poisonous*, and  
 may prove so to those who drink them ; and by pouring  
 into them such ingredients, as, though not destructive to the  
 lives or health of people, *weaken* the liquors themselves,  
 such as water, &c. How forcible the metaphor, and alas,  
 how justly descriptive is it of too many professed religious  
 teachers in all ages of the church, and in our own time also !  
 How has the pure gospel been adulterated by them, so that  
 the minds of many have been corrupted from the simplicity  
 that is in Christ ; and that, too, in ways corresponding to  
 those above mentioned ! For there are two ways in which  
 the souls of men may be corrupted and destroyed ; by *poi-  
 soning* them, and by *starving* them ; by preaching false  
 doctrine, and by keeping back the true doctrine. And how  
 frequently have souls in fact been corrupted and destroyed  
 in both these ways ! How careful, then, should ministers  
 be, that they do not “handle the word of God deceitfully ;”  
 that they do not corrupt the gospel, either by mixing with it  
 a vain philosophy, (Col. ii, 8), and curious speculations of  
 their own, to render it more specious and more agreeable to  
 the proud heart and depraved taste of man ; or by adding  
 to it the miserable “traditions of men,” useless ceremonies,  
 &c. the tendency of which things must be either to poison  
 or to starve the souls of men. It is said many people in  
 Paris (France) once lost their lives, in consequence of a  
 merchant’s selling them adulterated liquors. Ought not  
 corrupt teachers to fear lest a similar, though a more dread-  
 ful destruction, (because that of the soul, and an eternal  
 one), should ensue, on their adulteration of the lively ora-  
 cles ?

## CHAP. III, 18.

“But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

In the original, the word translated *open* is a passive participle, signifying exactly *unveiled*, or uncovered. Hence we learn the precise meaning of this text. Moses had a veil over his face. (Verse 13.) A moral veil was also upon the minds of the Jews, when their law was read. (Verses 14, 15.) But from true Christians, as living under a so much more luminous dispensation, the veil is removed, so that they, with *unveiled*, with uncovered, open face, may behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord. How valuable our privileges, how great our responsibility!

## CHAP. IV, 17.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

It is impossible to do perfect justice to the original of this text. The καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν, is, (says Mr. Blackwall, in his Sacred Classics), “infinitely emphatical, and cannot be expressed by any translation.” Assuming, however, our version of this passage, as being on the whole equally correct with any that can be produced, I request the reader's attention for a moment to the beautiful and energetic climax here observable, viz:—Glory; *weight* of glory; *eternal* weight of glory; *exceeding* and eternal weight of glory; *more* exceeding and eternal weight of glory; *far* more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Such, afflicted Christian, will be the certain product and gracious reward of those afflictions, which, for Christ's sake, and for conscience sake, you undergo in this world of trial. Again, very observable is the phraseology here used by the apostle, relative to his own afflictions themselves. He calls them *light* afflictions; or, as it is exactly, the lightness of our afflictions; i. e. lightness itself. But if we regard the *subject-matter* of his afflictions, viz. bonds, imprisonments, forty stripes save one, &c., beside those things which came

upon him daily, the anxious care of all the churches, we should be apt to think them uncommonly and exceedingly heavy and oppressive; yet still he calls them light afflictions—light, not absolutely, but comparatively, when compared with “the joy that was set before him.” Experience proves that the oppressiveness, or the contrary, of any trial, depends not so much upon what is *external* in it, as upon the temper of mind with which it is met, and sustained. If faith, and hope, and love, be in a low state within us, we shall “faint in the day of adversity;” but if they be in lively and vigorous exercise, “none of these things will move us.”

#### CHAP. VIII, 1.

“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God, bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.”

As the phrase “we do you to wit,” is now obsolete, and scarcely intelligible, it may be well, for the sake of common readers, to observe, that the corresponding original word signifies simply, “we make known.” The idea is, “we make known or declare unto you the grace of God, bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.”

#### VERSES 16, 17.

“But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.”

The only remark I make on these verses is, that taken in connection, they show that divine operation on the mind of man is perfectly consistent with his liberty. It was God who put that earnest care into the heart of Titus for the Corinthian church; and his so doing occasioned, and as it were necessitated, Titus’ going unto them for their relief. At the same time, Titus was altogether free in going, for “being more forward, *of his own accord* he went unto them.”

These texts may serve as specimens of many others that might be produced; and the general truth thereby established is, that divine operation on the heart or will of man, whether he be saint or sinner, never infringes his liberty, nor at all affects it, otherwise than as it may the more firmly

establish it. If God works in men to do, then they will necessarily *act*; and if he works in them to *will*, also, then they will necessarily act *freely*.

#### CHAP. XII, 2.

“I knew a man in Christ, above fourteen years ago; (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body I cannot tell; God knoweth); such a one caught up to the third heaven.”

This last expression is agreeable to the notions of the ancient Jews. They supposed three heavens. The first they placed in that part of the aerial regions where the birds fly, and the clouds move, and whence the showers descend. Hence we read of the fowls of heaven, Ps. civ, 12; of the clouds of heaven, Mat. xxiv, 30; and of the rain of heaven, Deut. xi, 11. The second heaven was that part of supernal space called now, as well as then, the *starry* heaven, where the sun, moon, and stars, and other heavenly bodies, are. Hence we read of the stars of heaven, Mark xiii, 25; and of the host of heaven, Acts vii, 42; by which phrase the heavenly bodies generally appear to be intended. The third, or highest heaven, the Jews considered as the residence of the blessed Jehovah, and of the holy angels; also, as the future receptacle and eternal home of all the redeemed. In this last sense is the word heaven used in the following places: Mat. v, 45, and xviii, 10: 2 Cor. v, 1. As St. Paul was a Jew, it was of course to be expected, that both in his preaching and in his writings, he would use, if not the Jewish language, yet at least the Jewish idiom, i. e. those modes of speaking which were peculiar to the Hebrew language. The above remarks may help us to understand, in part, what the apostle meant, when he spake of a certain man (i. e. himself) who was caught up to the *third* heaven.”

#### VERSE 16.

—“Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.”

Either this clause is to be understood as the objection of Paul's enemies against him; as what they said about him; or as an interrogation, like a similar clause in verse 18, res-

pecting Titus ; or the word  $\delta\omicron\lambda\omega$  must be here used in a good sense. In reference to the last interpretation it may be observed, that words, the same in the original, and in our translation too, are used sometimes in a good sense, and sometimes in a bad one. Of these, the words anger, emulation, tradition, are specimens. Of these three interpretations, however, the first, viz. that Paul here alludes to an insinuation or objection of his enemies, seems much the best. Surely nothing could have been further from the apostle's design, in this place, than to encourage *pious frauds*, falsely so called, or duplicity of any kind ; and they, who, whether Papists or Protestants, have understood and interpreted the passage in this sense, have not only done injustice to the apostle, but, it is to be feared, much injury to the cause of christianity.

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## GALATIANS.

### CHAPTER V, VERSE 4.

“ Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law ; ye are fallen from grace.”

Those who are but moderately acquainted with the theological controversies of the present day, know very well, that the subject of *falling from grace* has, among others, occupied much attention, and been the theme of much debate. To prove that true Christians may, and sometimes do, fall from grace, this passage has with others been frequently adduced. To some, this verse has probably appeared as sufficient of itself to support that doctrine ; one reason of which is the phraseology here used. For who can doubt whether Christians do not, or at least may not, fall from grace, when it is here expressly said that they had thus fallen ? Now, in all controversies, it is necessary that the precise point in debate should be explicitly stated, and fully understood. By falling from grace, as the phrase is used in this dispute, is, or ought to be meant, a true Christian's falling from an interest in the covenant of grace, from a vital union to his Redeemer, and losing entirely all his religion, so as to be lost forever. This is in reality the only point relative to this



subject, about which there is any room for debate between the two parties. As it has not been the author's design to engage in controversies, further than should appear necessary for the execution of his main purpose, announced in the title page; he will not, of course, at present concern himself with either the arguments for, or objections against, this doctrine. He would just observe, however, that this scripture has no reference to that doctrine, as above explained; and that even if it had, it could be of no force to support the Arminian sentiment respecting it. It is observable, that it is only one class of Christians, or of professed Christians, that is here said to have fallen from grace, (whatever may be intended by that phrase), viz. those who are "justified by the law." Strictly speaking, this is impossible. St. Paul declares, in Rom. iii, 20, that "by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his (God's) sight." All, therefore, St. Paul could have meant in the expression, "whosoever of you are justified by the law," must have been, 'whosoever of you *seek* to be justified by the law.' Such are the persons St. Paul here mentions, as having fallen from grace; and if by the term law, here, he meant the ceremonial law chiefly, (as the context shows, where he speaks so much of circumcision), why then the number of those here mentioned, as falling, or as having fallen from grace, must be still more limited.—Having shown what sort of persons are here intended, by those who had fallen from grace, it may be well to inquire, in the next place, what is intended by the *grace* itself, from which they had fallen. The general meaning of the word *χάρις*, is favor, kindness granted to the undeserving, to the poor and needy. It is used, however, by Christ and by his apostles, with various shades of meaning, (as every one acquainted with the Greek Testament knows), but which it is unnecessary to specify in this place. Suffice it to say, that in the passage before us, it means the *gospel*—the gospel plan or scheme of salvation, called, in Acts xx, 24, "the gospel of the grace of God." In this sense it is used in other passages. (See John i, 17: 2 Cor. vi, 1: Titus ii, 11.) These remarks seem to furnish the proper clew for the understanding of this passage. If we candidly peruse this epistle through-

out, we shall perceive that there was in the Galatians, or in many of them, a strong propensity to seek justification before God from the law, or (which is the same thing) on the ground of their own observances and works. (See particularly, chapters i, 6; ii, 21; iii, 1—4; iv, 10, 11.) To bring them off from this legal ground, and to establish them on a purely evangelical one, was the main object of St. Paul in writing this epistle, as must be evident to every one who attentively reads it. And such was manifestly his object in the passage before us, and in the entire context. The meaning, therefore, of this passage, must be substantially this, viz. ‘If you, Galatians, look to, and depend on, the law for justification, Christ is become of no effect, or is of no use to you: You have in this case fallen from, and given up, and renounced, the gospel plan, which proposes to save you by mere sovereign grace.’

#### CHAP. VI, 4.

“But let every man prove his own work; and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”

As to the proper import of the verb δοκιμαζέτω, (prove), see the criticism on 1 Cor. xi, 28. The inquiry now before us is, what is intended by the last clause of the verse, “Then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another?” The meaning evidently is, then shall he have that joy which arises from *his own* sight of his good state, and not merely from the favorable opinion entertained of him by others. In respect to this affair, as well as many others, “it is a light thing to be judged of man or of man’s judgment;” for this is frequently erroneous. But when we ourselves discern the evidences of our good state; when we see them ourselves; when our own eyes behold them, and not another’s; this affords satisfaction. Thus “the good man is satisfied *from himself*.”

#### VERSE 17.

“From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

“Let no man trouble me,” i. e. (as is evident from the context, and from the tenor of the whole epistle), with dis-

putes and contentions about circumcision, and the other peculiarities of Judaism. For this request the apostle subjoins the following reason; "for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." What did he mean by those marks? It is probable he referred to those scars and wounds which had been caused by the stripes he had received, and by those chains with which he had been bound, and galled, in the service of the Lord Jesus. The Greek word *στίγματα* denoted, literally, those marks or brands which were sometimes imprinted by the ancients, on their servants and soldiers, to show to whom they belonged; and the apostle might have used the word in a similar sense in this place. He might have referred to his *στίγματα*, also, as tokens not only of his past sufferings in the cause of Christ, but also of his continued, indissoluble relation to his adorable Lord, notwithstanding all those sufferings. In those scars and wounds the apostle gloried more, than did the Roman general in those scars and wounds which he had received in facing the enemies of his country. We hence learn, that the true believer glories in tribulation undergone for Christ's sake; and that no species nor degree of it, yea, 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor the height of prosperity, nor the depth of adversity, nor any other creature, can separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus his Lord.' Surely a believer, and especially a minister of this description, ought not to be needlessly troubled or impeded in his career to glory, and in his attempts to conduct poor sinners there, by "foolish questions and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law;" nor about many other things, too, which are frequently thrown in his way; but which are equally "unprofitable and vain."

## EPHESIANS.

## CHAPTER IV, VERSE 5.

——“One baptism.”

Those who are much acquainted with the merits of the baptismal controversy, with that part of it especially which relates to the *mode* of baptism, know that this expression has been often used by the advocates of immersion, to prove that there is only one scripture mode of baptism, or that water-baptism cannot, consistently with scripture precepts and examples, be administered in only one mode. This “one baptism” they suppose to be *immersion*, of course. It seems, however, that the “one baptism” here mentioned, is to be understood chiefly in opposition to those “divers washings,” διαφόροις βαπτισμοῖς, mentioned by the apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews, (ch. ix, 10), as having been practised by their fathers. Under the Jewish dispensation, there were divers washings, for divers purposes; and probably they were performed in divers manners. But under the christian dispensation, as being more simple than the Jewish, there is only *one* baptism. Christianity does not require the application or use of water, but for one purpose; its import, when administered in due form, and to qualified subjects, is always substantially one and the same; and there is no need nor propriety in administering it to the same subject but only once, or at one time. It is at least questionable, whether the apostle, in these words, had any reference at all to the mode of water baptism. Whatever, therefore, the mode may be, must be determined by other passages of scripture than this. Some, however, suppose (though not I think with sufficient grounds) that the apostle refers in this place to *spiritual baptism*.

## VERSE 8.

“Wherefore, he saith, when he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

This is a quotation from Ps. lxxviii, 18, and is supposed to contain an allusion to the practice of ancient kings, who, after victories, and on other great occasions, distributed gifts among their subjects. Thus, when the ark of the

Lord of Hosts had been brought from Kirjath-jearim to the city of David, and an oblation had been made of burnt offerings, David "dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as to the men, to every one, a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine." (2 Samuel vi, 19.) In like manner did Solomon, at the dedication of the temple. (1 Kings viii, 65.) But behold a greater than either Solomon or David is here. Greater also is his munificence, for it includes spiritual blessings in heavenly things, in Christ Jesus. For after he had "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly," and in testimony of complete triumph, had led captivity captive, and ascended up on high, *he* also dispersed gifts among his subjects. "And he gave some apostles, (i. e. some to be apostles), some (to be) prophets, some (to be) evangelists, and some (to be) pastors, and some (to be) teachers; and all for the most important purposes, even "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

#### VERSE 30.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

The sealing of the Spirit, here mentioned, seems to be a metaphor taken from a practice of merchants, viz. putting a certain mark, stamp, or seal, on their goods, whereby they might be known to be theirs. Or the phrase may refer, perhaps more probably, to the ancient custom of setting a seal or mark on the bodies of soldiers and servants, especially on their foreheads and hands; a fact, which, by the way, may assist in illustrating those texts, Ezek. ix, 4, and Rev. vii, 3. The day of redemption must here denote the day of the general resurrection and final judgment. (See a similar phrase used in Rom. viii, 23.) This passage, then, rightly understood, not only shows that God's servants have his peculiar distinguishing mark or seal upon them, which is his own moral image, but also appears strongly in point, to support the doctrine of their final perseverance and eternal happiness in the kingdom and favour of God.



## CHAP. VI, 19.

“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.”

Many scriptural words have been and still are misused, and made to convey such meanings as, to say the least, are quite foreign from their original import. The remark is applicable, in a degree, to the words heresy, schism, tradition, &c.; and still more so to the one now before us. The word *mystery* (in the Greek, *μυστήριον*) has been and now is used by the Papists, to denote the sacraments of the New Testament, and especially that of the eucharist. By Protestants, or by many of them, it has been used to denote something incomprehensible and unintelligible by the human mind. Thus, the co-existence of three persons in one God, and of two natures in the person of Jesus Christ, they have declared to be *mysterious*; meaning thereby, that by the mind of man they cannot be fully comprehended. But the Greek word *μυστήριον* signifies, primarily and properly, neither of these, but something *hidden*, concealed, in opposition to its being *revealed* and known. For proof of this, we need only to attend to the etymology of the word itself, and to the connection and sense in which it is almost invariably used in the New Testament.

1st. Its etymology. *Μυστήριον* is derived either from the Greek word *μυσειν*, to shut up, to conceal; or from the Hebrew noun *MISTAR*—a thing hidden, concealed; which is from the verb *SATAR*, to hide, conceal. The etymological import of the word, therefore, is not something incomprehensible, but something hitherto concealed—not revealed. And that such is in fact its proper meaning, is yet further evident—

2d. From the connection and sense in which the word is commonly, almost invariably, used in the New Testament. See, among numerous others, the following passages:—Mat. xiii, 11—“Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” But how could the disciples know those mysteries, if they were incomprehensible or unintelligible? Rom. xvi, 25, 26—“According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world

began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations, for the obedience of faith." Here a mystery is explained to be that which was *kept secret*, but which had been since revealed and *made manifest*, and *made known* to all nations. 1 Cor. xv, 51—"Behold I shew you a mystery." What mystery? The apostle proceeds, in the three succeeding verses, to tell us what it is. It is, in short, the mystery of the general resurrection, and of that glorious transformation which the bodies of the saints are then to experience. This subject had been kept concealed from the pagan Gentiles. The evidence in favor of a resurrection to a future life, from the light of nature, their only guide, was at the best presumptive merely, and was too weak, they thought, to render the doctrine credible. Hence the Greeks not only disbelieved, but derided it. (Acts xvii, 32.) To them, to the Corinthians in their pagan state, this doctrine had been a mystery; i. e. it had not been revealed to them; but having been shewed, revealed to them by the apostle, it was a mystery to them no longer. Certainly it was not to such of them as believed in the apostle's divine inspiration, and credited his testimony. Once more: Col. i, 25, 26—"The word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." Here a mystery is said to be that which had once been *hid*, but has since been *made manifest*. I shall quote at present no more passages; but would merely advise the reader, who may not be satisfied with the interpretation above given, and still adheres to the too prevailing modern one, to attend carefully to the following places, which are, I believe, all the rest where the word mystery occurs in the New Testament, viz: Mark iv, 11: Luke viii, 10: Rom. xi, 25: 1 Cor. ii, 6, iv, 1, xiii, 2, and xiv, 2: Eph. i, 9, iii, 3—9, v, 32: Col. ii, 2, and iv, 3: 2 Thess. ii, 7: 1 Tim. iii, 9, and iii, 16: Rev. i, 20, x, 7, and xvii, 5. He will perceive that in almost all the above texts, mystery (*μυστήριον*) denotes not something incomprehensible or unintelligible; but something which had been kept secret, but is now revealed, declared in the word of God, declared by him for our instruc-

tion, and which may of course be in some good measure known and understood by us. The practical use to be made of all that has been said on this article is, that we should be very careful to use scriptural words in their primitive and proper sense. To the neglect of this, or to the contrary practice, is to be attributed, in part, a great proportion of those doctrinal and practical errors, which have so much abounded in christendom.

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## PHILIPPIANS.

### CHAPTER I, VERSE 10.

“That ye may approve things that are excellent;” or, ‘that ye may try the things that differ,’ as the clause may be rendered.

These words, therefore, may be understood as expressing the apostle’s wish and petition, not merely that the Philippian Christians might cordially approve of those things which were really excellent; but also that their intellectual faculties might be exercised in distinguishing truth from error; that thus they might discover and determine what things were really excellent, and thus worthy of approbation. How indispensable then the duty, and how urgent the necessity, of examining, of searching the scriptures, and of investigating subjects *for ourselves*; for if we neglect this duty, and depend on the mere opinions of other men, we may indeed be “ever learning,” after a sort, but shall be apt “never to come to the (saving) knowledge of the truth.”

### VERSE 23.

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.”

This is to be classed among those texts of scripture, which exhibit the doctrine of a separate, intermediate state of existence; for it expresses the conviction of an inspired apostle, that immediately on his departure from this world, he should be with Christ. Thus to be, St. Paul says, is far better than to remain here; which could not be true, otherwise than on the ground that he would then be in a state of

both conscious and happy existence. In a word, the text before us teaches at once the doctrines both of a *separate* state, and of the *immediate* happiness of Christians at death.

### CHAP. III, 2.

“Beware of the concision.”

The word *κατατομήν*, rendered concision, and which may with equal propriety be rendered *excision*, seems in this place to denote those judaising teachers, who, in the apostolic age, infested not only the Philippian church, but many other churches also ; and who, as this characteristic word imports, cut off, or cut down. Indeed, the word may represent both their works and their punishment. By insisting so much on the necessity of circumcision, in order to salvation, (see Acts xv, 1), and by their incessant commixture of Judaism with Christianity, they cut down, as it were, the fundamental pillars of the latter, and cut off or frustrated the hopes of individuals, since “other foundation could no man lay, than that which was laid, which was Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. iii, 11.) The *doom* or punishment of these men may also have been referred to. By cutting off all well-grounded hopes of salvation from others, they did the same thing for themselves. By shutting up the kingdom of heaven against other men, they shut it against themselves, also, and were thus left to punish themselves, by being the authors of their own destruction. When the blind lead the blind, *both* will fall into the ditch. (Luke vi, 39.)

### VERSE 11.

“If, by any means, I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

This cannot mean the literal and general resurrection. For to the resurrection here spoken of, St. Paul represents it as difficult to attain ; and from the following verses it appears, that whether he should eventually attain to it or not, would depend on his own faithfulness or unfaithfulness. But in the literal resurrection, all men will participate, whether faithful or unfaithful, whether good or bad ; “for the hour is coming, in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.” (John v, 28, 29.)

By the resurrection of the dead, therefore, St. Paul must have here intended the receiving of that glorious and spiritual body mentioned in verse 21st, and there represented as opposed to his present vile body. Or to express it otherwise; in John v, 29, the Lord Jesus speaks of "the resurrection of life," and of "the resurrection of damnation." Now, it is the first of these resurrections that the apostle refers to in the words before us, even the resurrection unto eternal life. Such was the resurrection that the apostle here represents himself as so diligently seeking.

#### VERSE 20.

"For our conversation is in heaven."

The word conversation, in its vulgar sense, denotes familiar discourse—verbal communication. Sometimes it is used to signify intercourse, behavior, &c. But neither of these terms expresses the full meaning of the Greek noun here used. This is *πολίτευμα*, citizenship. The design of the apostle, therefore, in this expression, was to assert not only the practice, but also the *heavenly relation* of himself and of his Philippian brethren, and consequently of all true Christians.

### COLOSSIANS.

#### CHAPTER I, VERSE 24.

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church."

What does the apostle mean by "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ?" Certainly he does not mean that the sufferings of Christ were defective and insufficient, in the *expiatory* and propitiatory sense. We cannot suppose that he would thus have implicitly contradicted the evident import of the last words of his dying Lord—"It is finished." Besides, even if there had been any deficiency or insufficiency in the sufferings of Christ in this view, we cannot suppose that the apostle would ever have seriously thought of making up this deficiency by his own personal sufferings, and thus have placed himself, as it were, on a level with



Christ, by undertaking to perform, in conjunction with him, the peculiar, appropriate work of an atoning Saviour! By "the afflictions of Christ," in this passage, must be intended afflictions endured *for the sake* of Christ; for the defence of his truth, and the advancement of his cause on earth. Christ himself had suffered much for these purposes, as well as in the capacity of an atoning and propitiatory sacrifice. But there was something behind yet. His people, and especially his ministers, must not only labor, but *suffer* much, in order that the great and most benevolent purposes for which he came into the world might be accomplished; that his body, the church, might be edified and enlarged to the degree designed in the divine counsels, and that the glory of God might be thereby promoted. The faithful preaching of the gospel was always in those days attended with many sufferings. But under all these the apostle rejoiced, in view of "the joy set before him," and of the good which would thereby accrue to others. In another view, also, these his sufferings might be called the sufferings of Christ, viz. as they, or many of them, were of the same *kind* that Christ underwent, and were endured with the same *spirit*.

#### CHAP. II, 8.

"Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

The word translated spoil is a compound, being derived from *σῦλα*, spoils, and *αγω*, to lead away, or carry off. Primarily, it relates to, and is descriptive of the conduct of a victorious enemy, who, having subdued his antagonist, dispossesses him of his treasures, and carries them off as spoils from the field of battle. How forcibly expressive, then, is it of that complete moral subjection and ruin, to which the apostle considered the Colossians as exposed from philosophy. The *φιλοσοφία*, however, which the apostle here mentions, cannot intend true and genuine philosophy; for it would be very absurd to pretend that this can ever be hostile, or in any way injurious to christianity. Neither does christianity forbid or discourage our attention to the sciences generally, but is friendly to them all, when they are pursued

and cultivated in due subordination to our immortal interests. It is too notorious to be denied, that most of the literature and science that have been in the world, since the commencement of the christian era, have been in christian nations, and have been owing, no doubt, to the fostering influence of christianity itself. But by philosophy, in this passage, the apostle intends what may be called philosophism, false philosophy, vain and deceitful, as in this same verse he describes it; or "science, falsely so called," as in 1 Tim. vi, 20. In a word, the object of St. Paul, in this verse, was to warn us against being corrupted from "the simplicity that is in Christ," by infidel philosophy on the one hand, or by Jewish or any other human traditions and inventions on the other. How seasonable, how important, the warning in our own days, also! "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

#### VERSE 18.

"Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind."

The only particular in this verse which seems to require illustration, is "worshipping of angels." What is intended by such worship? To understand this subject correctly, it must be remembered that the primitive church, though so highly favored with divine inspiration and apostolic instruction, soon began to be infested and corrupted by pagan philosophy and Jewish traditions. And perhaps no particular church was more so than the one at Colosse. (See ch. ii, 8, 16, &c.) This worshipping of angels seems to have originated among the Pagans. At first, it seems, those angels, or imaginary angels, were regarded by them as mediators only between the Deity and themselves; but that in process of time, as might have been expected, they became more directly the objects of religious adoration themselves. Indeed, the process in this matter, among the heathen, appears to have been much the same as it was afterwards in the Roman papal church, in respect to the images of departed saints. Accordingly, in ecclesiastical history,

image-worship itself, as practised by that church, is considered as having come from the Gentiles. (See Milner, vol. iii, page 154.) These remarks may serve to prepare the way for our understanding what is here meant by the worshipping of angels. Certain persons, it seems, in the church at Colosse, were still so much under the influence of their old pagan philosophy and superstition, that they were for introducing angels into their worship; i. e. for introducing angels as helps in divine worship, as mediators, pretending it was too much, too great arrogance for such mean creatures as men were, to attempt to worship the Majesty of Heaven, without their mediation. There was an appearance of humility in all this; but it was nothing more. It was a mere *voluntary* humility; one entirely of their own invention and choice; such an humility as Jehovah never required, and would never approve: Yea, it was *no* true humility. It deserved a far different name. It was in reality, pride, rank pride, as it led the subjects of it to "exercise themselves in great matters, and in things too high for them;" to pry presumptuously into the invisible world, and to attempt to understand and teach such things concerning angels as are nowhere revealed. Thus they intruded into those things which they had not seen, and could not see, nor know, and became, of course, vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds. Besides, by introducing the worship or mediation of angels, they would rob the Redeemer of his appropriate glory; for he is the one and the only mediator between God and men. (1 Tim. ii, 5.) No wonder, then, that the apostle should give such a caution against the worshipping of angels.

#### CHAP. III, 14.

"And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

It is probable that most readers consider the word *above*, as here denoting *preference*; as if St. Paul had said, 'Put on charity, as preferable to all the other virtues,' mentioned in verse 12. Indeed, charity, or love, must be allowed to have the pre-eminence over all the other characteristics of the true believer. (See 1 Cor. xii, 31, and ch. xiii, *ad finem*.) It does not, however, appear to have been the design of *this*

passage, to recognise such pre-eminence. The passage is supposed to be figurative, and to refer to the manner in which the ancients, and especially the ancient soldiers, were clothed. They used to have a girdle tied around and over their other garments. That girdle served as a *bond* or ligament, to keep their other garments tight and close together. To a similar tendency and operation of charity, the apostle seems here to refer. Charity, or love, would prove as a “bond of perfectness,” or a perfect bond, to keep together and adjust all the other graces and gifts of the Christian. How important, therefore, that in love to God, and in brotherly love, we should “increase more and more.” (1 Thes. iv, 9, 10.)

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## I. THESSALONIANS.

### CHAPTER II, VERSE 17.

“But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time, in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face, with much desire.”

The apostle here refers to the event related in Acts xvii, 10. In consequence of the insurrection, menaces, and violence of the Jews, the brethren were obliged to send away himself and Silas by night, from Thessalonica to Berea; and his design, in the first part of this verse, was to declare not only the fact of his having been then separated from them, but also the *manner* of such separation, i. e. as it respected his own feelings. It was, in short, as the original imports, like that of children suddenly torn from their affectionate parents, or otherwise deprived of them, and thus made orphans. How peculiar, how tender, and strong, are the feelings of pious ministers towards their people!

### CHAP. III, 13.

“To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints.”

The word saints, as commonly used, denotes the “redeemed from among men.” It is well known, however, by every one acquainted with the original, that the word *ἁγίοι*,

translated saints, is a general word, and that it is with equal propriety applicable to any intelligent beings, possessing sanctity of character. It is applied to God the Father, 1 Pet. i, 15 ; to Jesus Christ, Mark i, 24 ; to the Holy Spirit, Mat. i, 18 ; to the good angels, Luke ix, 26 ; to the Old Testament prophets, Luke i, 70 ; to both the prophets and apostles, and to believers generally, Acts ix, 13, 41. In short, the word, when used without a noun, and with the article, as in this passage, signifies *the holy ones*. If now the inquiry be, what class of holy beings is intended by this phrase in the verse before us, the answer is, probably, the *angels*. It should be remembered, that in this place the apostle is speaking of the second coming of Jesus Christ—of his coming to judge the world. Now, we are expressly told in other places, that when he shall come for this purpose, the angels shall descend with and attend him. (See Mat. xxv, 31 : 2 Thes. i, 7.) Again, it will be naturally impossible for the *redeemed* saints to accompany their Saviour, in his final descent from heaven, and that, too, in their perfect man, consisting of both soul and body. And much less will *all* of them be able thus to attend him on that great occasion, because all their bodies (those only of Enoch and Elijah excepted, and those excepted who shall be alive on the earth at that time) will then be in their graves. For the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, before even the dead in Christ shall arise. (Ch. iv, 16.) It seems, necessary, therefore, with McKnight, Rosenmuller, and others, to refer the term saints, as here used, to the *holy angels* ; they being the saints, or the holy ones, whom St. Paul seems to have intended in this passage.

#### CHAP. IV, 15.

“For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep.”

The sense appears to be this, viz : We, i. e. those saints who shall remain alive at the second coming of Christ, shall not enter heaven any *sooner* than those other saints, who had already died, or who would have died before the coming of



the Lord, and who are then to arise; but all those who should then have "fallen asleep in Christ," and all others who shall then be alive, and shall have been redeemed to God by his blood, shall be admitted to that holy and happy world at one and the same time.

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## II. THESSALONIANS.

### CHAPTER II, VERSES 7, 8.

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

By the mystery of iniquity, or of lawlessness, is to be understood, generally, antichristianism, which began to appear at so early a period as the apostolic age, in the ambitious, domineering spirit of some ministers, in the factious, schismatical spirit of many professors, and in various corruptions of christian doctrine; and which would more fully appear in these respects, and in others, in subsequent ages of the church, under a papal form. The phrase, "he who now letteth," (or hindereth, withstandeth), is supposed to denote the imperial Roman power or civil government, which, from motives of policy, operated as a check upon ecclesiastical predominance and corruptions, and would thus operate for a considerable season longer. But afterwards, after the then existing impediment should have been removed, the wicked or lawless one, i. e. the papacy, with all its peculiar deformity, would appear; which accordingly was or began to be the case, A. D. 606. But this antichristian power was to "endure but for a while." The apostle expressly predicts his overthrow, and declares by what means it should be accomplished: "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." The consumption and destruction here predicted, must be principally of the *moral* kind. This appears, whether we consider the *means* with which they should be accomplished, viz. the spirit of the Lord's mouth, and

the brightness of his coming ; i. e. generally, the influences of his Spirit, accompanying the bright display of his truth, especially in the faithful preaching of it ; (means evidently suited to accomplish no destruction but that of sin) ; or the *fact*, that the Papists, as a body of people, have not yet been literally destroyed, though this awful prophecy has been fulfilling against them three hundred years, but are still very numerous—their number being supposed to amount to 140,000,000. The destruction of this antichristian power, as such, began at the time of the great reformation, A. D. 1517, has been going on ever since, and will be completed at the close of the 1260 years.

#### VERSES 11, 12.

“And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie ; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

The 11th verse, if literally interpreted, would certainly show, that there is some agency of God in sin, but doubtless such an one as neither reflects on his immaculate purity, on the one hand, nor abridges human liberty, on the other. The 12th verse illustrates the true cause of the condemnation and final ruin of sinners. This is their own wicked choice. It is their being “pleased with unrighteousness.”

### I. TIMOTHY.

#### CHAPTER II, VERSE 4.

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

As this text has been much used in the universalian controversy, and is much relied on by the advocates for the final salvation of all mankind, it has become, for this reason, very important to investigate its true meaning. To this end let it be observed,

1st. The passage may express merely God's *willingness* that all men should be saved. Indeed, although the verb *θελω* sometimes expresses *wish*, desire, &c. yet, according

to Schrevelius, mere willingness is its primary signification. Now, in this sense, Jehovah, undoubtedly, willeth that all men should be saved. For he saith, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die; and not that he should return from his ways and live?" Far from this: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezek. xviii, 23, and xxxiii, 11.) Such is the benevolence of the blessed God, that it is morally impossible he should be pleased with the death or misery of any human being, *in itself considered*. Human happiness and human misery being considered abstractedly, the former would, in his mind, be infinitely preferable to the latter. Hence, then, and in this sense, he may be said to will the salvation of all men. But this does not imply that all men will in fact be saved. If from the mere goodness of God, and his willingness that all men should be happy, we may conclude that all will in fact be saved, and be eternally happy in another world; from the same premises we may conclude as well against undeniable matter of fact, viz. the existence of sin and misery in the present world; for the principle of the reasoning is in both cases the same. If because the Lord is good, he will necessarily save all men from eternal misery, then for the same reason, one would think, would he save them from temporal misery, also, or prevent their enduring it, which we know he does not. If from the mere willingness of God that all men should be holy and happy in the future world, we may conclude that all will be holy and happy *there*; then from his willingness that they all should be holy and happy in this world, also, we might conclude that they all would, while *here*, be both holy and happy. But the conclusion does by no means result from the premises in either case. Though the Lord be willing that all sinners should be saved, if they would be willing, yet none of them are in their natural state willing to be saved, i. e. in his own way; and to say that this natural unwillingness will ever be overcome, or in any way removed from all sinners, is to beg the question. And if it could be proved that the phrase, "who will have all men to be saved," means that God actually *wishes*, desires the salvation of all men, (which, *in itself considered*, he

doubtless doth wish) ; and if it should hence be concluded that all men will hereafter and eventually be holy and happy ; the inquiry is, why then are they not all holy and happy in this world ; for is not the latter an object of divine desire, equally and in the same sense with the former ? But

2d. In this verse, the apostle may refer to God's *preceptive* will or command ; and in this sense, also, it is his will that all should be saved. For not only doth he direct that his gospel be preached to every creature, but "now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts xvii, 31.) And says St. John, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ." A command to repent of sin, and to believe in Christ, amounts to the same thing with a command to be saved ; because such repentance and faith are by a divine constitution connected with the salvation of the soul, and are required for that purpose. But whatever may be the import of the word *will*, (which is the key to the whole passage), it is obvious that the word itself extends alike to both clauses of the verse. Let us read it again : "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." In the same sense, therefore, in which God willeth all men to be saved, doth he will them all to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now the latter clause may be interpreted in perfect consistency with either, and with both of the above mentioned constructions. For that God is *willing* that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, appears from his direction to his ministers, to preach his gospel to every creature. (Mark xvi, 15.) And that he *commandeth* all who have his written word to come to this knowledge, will not be denied by such as have properly read their Bibles, and believe that they are his word. The heathen also have a law, (Rom. ii, 14), and are thereby required to attend to truth and duty, so far as they can be learned from the light of nature, and are inexcusable because they do not. (Rom. i, 20.) But to carry the matter further—to say that the Lord hath *purposed* that all should come to the knowledge of the truth in this world, is saying far too much, if it be true, that what the Lord of Hosts hath purposed none can disannul, (Isa. xiv, 27) ; and that what he hath determined



shall be done, (Dan. xi, 36) ; for it is notorious that all have not, and do not come to the knowledge of the truth. The purpose of God, and the providence or providential agency of God, must always correspond to each other ; for the latter is only an execution of the former. God doth as he eternally meant to do, and eternally meant to do just as he doth. None can reasonably deny this. If, therefore, it ever were really his purpose that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth in this world, he would have so ordered things in his providence, that this event should have taken place. But as in fact the event never has taken place, we must conclude that God never purposed, never decreed that it should—never willed it, in *this* sense. On the whole, it seems that there is no consistent and proper way of interpreting this passage, but what is contained in one or the other of the two constructions above mentioned.

#### VERSES 14, 15.

“ And Adam was not deceived ; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety.”

But is there not decisive proof, from Gen. iii, 6, that Adam was deceived, and was a transgressor in the affair of the forbidden fruit, and as really so as Eve? St. Paul's meaning is, that Adam was not *first* deceived ; and the truth of this appears from Moses' account of the temptation. It thence appears that the woman was first, in both the deception and the transgression : Yea, in a sense, it may be said that Adam was not deceived by the *serpent* at all ; for, from the Mosaic narrative, it appears that his transgression was in direct compliance, not with the temptation of the devil, but with the solicitations of the woman. But what can be the meaning of verse 15th? That the child-bearing there mentioned is not to be understood literally, is at least probable, from the immediately subjoined condition of her being saved therein or thereby, viz. her continuance in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety. But that impious and infamous women are conducted through the pains of the literal parturition, as safely, and perhaps as frequent-



ly, as those of the most exemplary virtue, is too evident to be denied. The word saved here seems to denote *spiritual* salvation; and the word child-bearing, the *child born*—the seed of the woman—the Messiah. The preposition here translated in—“*in* child-bearing,” when coupled with and governing a genitive case, as in this instance, denotes frequently the cause, either efficient or instrumental, as in John i, 3; Luke i, 70; Rom. v, 11, and iii, 24; and such appears to be its import in this place. The meaning of the apostle, then, appears to have been this:—‘Though the woman was first deceived, and in the transgression, yet her condition, in respect to pardon and eternal happiness, is by no means desperate; for she may, nay, she certainly shall be saved, in; through, or by that glorious Redeemer, who was to be (and has been) born of her; provided only she obeys him, in the exercise of faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety.’ This is a very ancient interpretation, and appears to be the best that has been given of this passage.

#### CHAP. IV, 1—4.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created, to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”

The Protestants appear to be correct in their application of this paragraph of scripture to the Papists, chiefly because the characteristics herein enumerated have been so peculiarly exhibited by the latter. The *διδασκαλίαις δαιμονίων*, translated “doctrines of devils,” signify exactly doctrines of *demons*. (See an explanation of this word in the remarks on 1 Cor. x, 20.) But here arises the inquiry, whether we are by this expression to understand doctrines taught *by* demons, or doctrines *concerning* demons? The last is doubtless the true construction of the phrase, viz. doctrines concerning demons. The Papists have in fact given heed, and still give heed, to seducing spirits. They have also taught many doctrines concerning demons; have recommended

and established among themselves images, and image-worship, and said many equally strange and groundless things, about the efficacy of the intercessions of departed saints, and even represented those saints as the proper objects of religious adoration. The propriety, therefore, of applying these verses primarily and chiefly to them, cannot be reasonably questioned.

#### CHAP. v, 9.

“Let not a widow be taken into the number, under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man.”

Into what number does the apostle here mean? Surely not the number of church members; for neither of the conditions here specified, viz. being of the age of sixty years, or having been the wife of one man, could have been a prerequisite for an admission into that society. Into the visible church a young person, and a person who had always lived in celibacy, were as admissible (other things being equal) as any other person. The number here intended must have been the number of those who were to be maintained by the charity of the church, and perhaps to act as deaconesses in it. To this interpretation the whole context obviously points. (See particularly, verses 3, 4, 8, and 16.)

#### CHAP. vi, 8.

“And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.”

The original word translated raiment, properly signifies *covering*. It is a generic or general word, and in its application ought not of course to be restricted to mere raiment, the covering for the body. It is, at least, and with equal propriety, applicable to a dwelling-place, a house, or house-covering. (See Rosenmuller, *in loco*.) This exhortation of the apostle, therefore, does not forbid, but implicitly allows us to be suitably careful and laborious, for the requisite accommodations and comforts of life generally, such as food, raiment, dwelling houses, &c. for ourselves and families. At the same time it must be conceded, that by implication it forbids us to seek after more, i. e. for ourselves and ours; and like the similar precept in Mat. vi, 25, forbids anxiety about even these.

## II. TIMOTHY.

## CHAPTER I, VERSE 10.

“Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

By life and immortality, or incorruption, some have understood Jesus Christ himself particularly, as exemplifying in his own person, and by his resurrection from the dead, that life and immortality which are to be the inheritance of all true believers. The meaning of the expression they suppose to be much the same with that of 1 John i, 2, “the life was manifested;” i. e. Christ, our life, (Col. iii, 4), was manifested. But does it not seem rather absurd to say, that Christ brought himself to light? The phrase “life and immortality,” is a Hebraism for immortal life. The common understanding of this text, and which amounts to this, viz. that Jesus Christ hath brought the immortality of the soul, and a future state, and particularly the eternal life of the righteous, clearly to light by the gospel, seems altogether the best. It should, however, be observed, that the form of expression here used, viz. brought these subjects to light, or *illustrated* them by the gospel, seems to convey an intimation that these glorious truths themselves were contained in the Old Testament, though not therein so clearly revealed; a position, by the way, supportable from several passages of scripture. (See among others, Mat. xxii, 29—33.)

## CHAP. II, 4.

“No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

It was a statute of the Roman government, that a certain class of their soldiers, called the legionary soldiers, should not engage in agriculture, merchandise, or, in short, in any other occupation which would divert their minds from the appropriate business of their own profession. To that statute, and to the practice of the Roman soldiers consequent thereon, St. Paul is supposed to refer in this passage. His obvious design was, to illustrate, by a reference to the duty and practice of those who were then engaged in carnal warfare, the duty of the minister of the gospel, the soldier of the

cross ; to show that *he*, also, should not permit any worldly business or recreations to divert his mind from such supreme and constant attention to his appropriate work, as its unutterable importance, difficulty, and responsibility, demand. It is, by the way, natural to remark, that if such be the duty of christian ministers ; if, in particular, they so *do*—are thus devoted to their work ; their people are under the strongest obligations to afford them a competent worldly maintenance. Humanity and justice, in this case, require it ; not to insist at present on those numerous texts of scripture which require this duty at their hands.

### CHAP. III, 16.

“ All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

Of all the passages commented upon in this work, none is more practically important, and none more deserves our serious attention, than this. It is here said, “ all scripture is given by inspiration of God,” or is “ divinely inspired,” as *θεόπνευστος* may be rendered. St. Paul must have here referred directly and chiefly to the scriptures of the Old Testament, because, as appears from the preceding verse, they were those scriptures which Timothy had known from his childhood. But there is good reason to believe, that in Timothy’s childhood no part of the New Testament was extant in the written form. But though in this passage, Paul must have had his eye directly upon the Old Testament scriptures, the declaration here made is doubtless true in reference to those of the New also. All that seems necessary for the illustration of this text, may be embraced in the answers to these two questions, viz : What is meant by divine inspiration, and what by the declaration, *all* scripture is divinely inspired ?

I. What is meant by divine inspiration, in this passage ? No doubt we are to understand by it, in general, some divine agency or influence on the minds of the sacred penmen, when they wrote the holy scriptures. So far all theological writers are agreed. But when they proceed further, and attempt to tell us what sort of agency or influence that was ; and one says it was the inspiration of suggestion ; another says it was the inspiration of superintendency ; and another



thinks that in respect to some parts of scripture, it ought to be called the inspiration of elevation ; we perceive they are far from being agreed in their views on this point. It may be most useful for common readers, and may, therefore, best comport with the design of the present work, if (instead of adopting these expressions, or showing what is meant precisely by them) I should comprehend, in a few particulars, what seems to be most important in relation to this subject. I remark, then,

1st. Divine inspiration is two-fold ; it relates to what holy men of old *spake*, and to what they *wrote*. The apostle Peter applies it to what they *spake*, where he says, "Holy men of God *spake* as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ;" that is, when they delivered or uttered their predictions. And whenever those holy men *spake* in the name of God, and delivered the divine message to their fellow men in any form, whether as a prediction or as a doctrine, or as a reproof, or as a command, they were divinely inspired, or were "moved by the Holy Ghost," in so doing. But in the text now commented upon, divine inspiration is predicated of what they *wrote*, of the *record* which they made. "All *scripture* is given by inspiration of God." What is *scripture* ? Is it something spoken, or something *written* ? The latter, surely. That divine inspiration which was granted to the ancient prophets, was, therefore, two-fold, relating both to their *oral* and to their *written* communications.

2d. Divine inspiration was not confined to *new* truths, or truths not known before. In the 105th and 106th Psalms, David records the wonderful dealings of God with the ancient Israelites, together with their frequent acts of rebellion against Him. And in the 7th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we have a similar historical statement, as made by the martyr Stephen, and which is there recorded by St. Luke. Now, these facts were no *new* truths to the Jews, in the sense that they were not known by them before. They had been well known by that people, during all their successive generations, for several centuries past. But David and Luke were, nevertheless, moved by the Holy Ghost to record them. Divine inspiration, therefore, is not confined to new truths—truths not known before. It would be well



for us to keep this fact distinctly in mind, when we read the scriptures, and especially the *historical* parts of them ; for we should thereby be relieved of some difficulties which we must otherwise experience in respect to the divine inspiration of the scriptures. Nor,

3d. Was the inspiration of the sacred writers confined to the *subject-matter* of what they were to communicate ; but had respect to their *language*, also ; that is, to the words and expressions they were to use. “ Which things we speak, (says Paul), not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which (that is, which *words*) the Holy Ghost teacheth.” (1 Cor. ii, 13.) The words and expressions to be used in communicating a divine revelation to mankind, are, obviously, of too much importance, to be left in any uncertainty or contingency. How careful are men in respect to the words and expressions they use in their important worldly concerns ; as, for instance, in their wills, in their deeds and conveyances, in their notes and receipts, and in every written document of importance ! What great caution, in respect to phraseology, is used in all the commissions and instructions that are given by the government to their public officers ; to all their foreign ambassadors, particularly ! It is well known, that in respect to worldly concerns, much depends frequently on a single word used in the written instrument. And may not this be equally true in respect to a divine revelation ? Is it not evident, that in the latter case, verbal exactness must be unspeakably more important and necessary than it can be in the former, because a revelation from God must relate chiefly to those interests of ours, that are immensely more important than any of a worldly kind can be ? And can we suppose that any mere fallible man would or could, of himself, and without divine direction, be so happy as to hit always upon those very words and expressions, which would be most suited to convey the “ mind of the Spirit,” neither more nor less, but exactly that which the Holy Ghost intended ? This, surely, is not credible. We may see, then, in the very nature of the case, an absolute necessity of that which Paul declares as a fact, in the passage just quoted, viz. the influence and direction of the Holy Ghost, in respect to the *words*, the language used by

himself and by his fellow-apostles, in communicating divine truth to mankind.

4th. Divine inspiration did not dispense with, nor suspend, the *natural faculties* of the sacred writers. Speaking to his apostles, Christ said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John xiv, 26.) The Holy Ghost, then, made use of and improved the *memories* of the apostles, and in this way enabled them to communicate to mankind what Christ had previously taught them. Every inspired writer has indeed a mental character, a style and diction, peculiar to himself. But the Holy Ghost made use of the natural faculties of each, such as they were; and every one was left to communicate divine messages, and divine truth, in his own way.

5th. The inspiration intended by the apostle in this passage, must relate chiefly to the scriptures in their *original languages*. The inspiration which he here ascribes to the writers of the holy scriptures, must relate to those scriptures as those holy men wrote them. But they wrote them in the original languages; the Old Testament in the Hebrew, and the New in the Greek. Let no one be shaken in mind, or be troubled by this remark, in respect to the authenticity of our English Bible. As a whole, it is a very faithful and very excellent translation, made directly from the original languages. But none pretends that the translators themselves, though holy and learned men, were at the same time divinely inspired, in the sense in which the original writers were. Our translation itself is the work of uninspired and fallible men; just as all the other translations of the sacred volume are, which have been made, whether in ancient or modern times, into the various languages of the world. And hence none ought to think it strange, if in some respects our English version should be found imperfect, and capable of amendment. But,

II. In what sense is divine inspiration predicable of the whole sacred volume; or what are we to understand by the declaration, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God?*" It has been already remarked, that in these words, Paul must have referred to the Old Testament scripture—to the

writings of Moses and the prophets ; though what is here affirmed is equally true of those of the New. This, viz. the divine inspiration of the New Testament writers, I here assume, without undertaking to prove the point at large, which would lead me into a discussion quite foreign to my present design, and to the nature of the present work. It ought, however, to be remarked, that the Old and New Testaments are the *only* writings that can properly make claim to a divine origin. No such claim can properly be made for the *Apocrypha*. For that this, though excellent as a history and in other respects, and though frequently bound in the same volume with the Old and New Testaments, was not given by special divine inspiration, appears from various considerations, some of which are these : The Jewish church did not receive it as canonical ; neither Christ nor his apostles ever quoted from, or referred to it. Accordingly, the council of Laodicea, in A. D. 368, do not mention the apocryphal books, as among those used by the church. But the question recurs, how is Paul's declaration now before us to be understood, in reference to the canonical scriptures—the Old and New Testaments ? We are not to understand from it, that every thing said in the scriptures was *dictated by the Spirit of God* ; that is, as said by the speakers themselves. We have in the Bible the speeches and the sayings of Satan, of evil demons, and of evil men. (See Gen. iii, 4 : Job i, 9 : Mat. iv, 3, 6, 9, and viii, 31 : Luke iv, 33, 34, and viii, 32 : 1 Sam. xxx, 32 : Luke xxiii, 21 : Acts xxiii, 14.) None pretends that what these wicked beings here said was dictated by the Spirit of God, or that *they* were divinely inspired, when they said the things attributed to them in these passages. But though these speakers themselves were not divinely inspired, in *saying* what they did ; yet the sacred writers were divinely inspired, in *recording* what they said. And this is what is mainly intended by the declaration, "*All scripture* is given by inspiration of God ;" that is, the *record* itself is divinely inspired ; the sacred penmen were divinely inspired, in making that record, in writing the sacred volume. To a well-disposed and enlightened mind, a few such passages as those above referred to, and which contain the speeches of devils and

wicked men, will not occasion any serious difficulty in respect to that species of inspiration, which relates to the *contents*, the subject-matter of the Bible ; and they do not at all affect that species of it which relates to the *record* itself, and which is intended in the passage now commented upon. The sacred writers might have had the guidance of the Holy Ghost, when they wrote or recorded the sayings and speeches of devils and wicked men, equally as when they wrote any other part of the holy scriptures. It is to be carefully remembered, that when they recorded those speeches, or any of those abominable sins, which are mentioned in scripture, they never express the *divine approbation* of them ; but always the contrary, when there is any occasion for their so doing. The inspired writer records as a matter of fact, David's adultery and murder, (2 Sam. xi) ; but he adds—"The thing which David had done displeased the Lord." It is not necessary, in order to the whole Bible's being the word of God, that every thing recorded in it as having been said or done, should have been immediately dictated by the Spirit of God ; or that it should be, in itself considered, agreeable to the holy nature of God. In a word ; when inspiration is predicated of the entire Bible ; when it is said, as in the passage now before us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," reference is had to the *record* itself ; and the meaning is, that in making that record, the sacred penmen were divinely influenced, and directed just what to write, and how to write it ; so that the Bible might be, both as to matter and form, exactly what God would have it to be ; and that it might contain just what he saw proper and necessary to be communicated for the advancement of his own glory, and for the instruction and best good of mankind. And it is in this sense that "*all* scripture" is divinely inspired, and that it is even *all* of it the "word of God." (See Woods on Inspiration.)



## HEBREWS.

## CHAPTER II, VERSE 5.

“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.”

What is meant by “the world to come,” in this passage? It is probable most readers understand by this expression, the *future state of existence*. But this is a mistake. “The Jews were accustomed to dispute concerning the two ages of the world; the one of which they called OLAM HAZZE, the present age or world; the other OLAM HABBAU, the age or world to come. The former, in their opinion, was to comprehend the time from the creation to the advent of the Messiah. The latter they referred to the joyful time when the Messiah should come.” (See Robinson’s Greek Lexicon.) This world to come, i. e. the times and concerns of the christian dispensation, as distinguished from all preceding dispensations, had not been subjected to the angels. The angels had had much to do in the concerns of the Mosaic or Jewish dispensation, and had exercised a very considerable control over them. In particular, they were the principal instruments whom God used in the introduction of that dispensation, or in the delivery and promulgation of the law. Hence St. Stephen reminds the Jews, that they had “received the law by the disposition of angels,” (Acts vii, 53); and St. Paul declares that this law was ordained by angels, in the hand of a Mediator. (Gal. iii, 19.) But they had not had a similar agency in the introduction of the christian dispensation; nor had they been permitted to exercise such a management and influence over its concerns, as they had exercised over those of the Jewish. The honor of doing these things was reserved for one greater than the angels; for the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all the angels themselves were subjected, and whom they all were required to worship and obey. (Ch. i, 6.)

## VERSE 9.

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor,” &c.

The words in the Greek, βαχχύ τι, may relate either to Christ’s grade of existence, while he abode on earth, or to



the duration of that abode. In Luke xxii, 58, these same words are translated "a little while;" and in Acts v, 34, "a little space;" and evidently, in both these places, the sense admits of no other translation than what is there given. Some good expositors, as Erasmus, Beza, Grotius, McKnight, Schleusner, and Rosenmuller, have construed these words in this passage, as though they related to *time* only—thus:—"But we see Jesus, who was made a little while, or for a little while, lower than the angels."

#### VERSE 16.

"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham."

This passage is commonly understood as teaching that Christ, in his incarnation and appearance on earth, did not assume the angelic nature and form, but rather the human nature and form; i. e. that for our redemption he became a man, and not an angel. Now, that this was a truth, that Christ did assume, not the angelic nature, but the human nature, and that too with all its infirmities and evils except sin, into an intimate union with the divine nature, that he might thereby be fully qualified for the work which the Father had given him to do, is undeniable. But the question is, was this *the* truth chiefly meant in this place, or was this the main thing here intended by the apostle? Whoever understands the original, and will attend to the etymology of the verb here used, will perceive that its precise meaning is, *to lay hold on*, or *to lay hold of*. Accordingly, it is thus rendered in almost all the instances of its occurrence in the New Testament. (See Mat. xiv, 31: Mark viii, 23: Luke xxiii, 26, and xx, 20, 26: 1 Tim. vi, 12, 19.) This text, then, may, at least as properly, be translated thus:—"He laid not hold on angels, but he laid hold on the seed of Abraham." Such is the interpretation of the verse given by many commentators, and such is probably the true interpretation of it. And what a good sense does it make! What an important truth does it exhibit; a truth, which is not only elsewhere and abundantly taught in the scriptures, but which constitutes the very essence of the gospel. St. Peter tells us, that "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast

them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." For them there is no redemption. But for the seed of Abraham, for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the Saviour became incarnate; them he came to redeem; on them he *took hold*, to deliver them from going down to the pit. We are not to suppose, from this passage, that the covenant of redemption includes none but the lineal seed of Abraham; nor that it includes *all* even of them; "for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children." (Rom. ix. 6, 7.) The covenant of redemption includes, and Christ came to redeem, all those who ever have been, all who are now, and all who ever shall be, the *spiritual* seed of Abraham, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; and undoubtedly the aggregate number of the saved from the Gentiles will be unspeakably greater than such number from the Jews. Still, however, it was proper that in this place the seed of *Abraham* should be particularly mentioned; because not only was the gospel first published to them, and our Lord in person published it to them *only*, and by this means, as well as by the concurring agency of his Spirit, peculiarly took hold on them to save them; but also this epistle was written to them.

#### CHAP. IV, 9.

"There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God."

Σαββατισμὸς, the word here translated rest, signifies properly and exactly, a keeping or enjoying of the Sabbath. And in this sense, the verb σαββατίζω, from which the noun σαββατισμὸς is derived, is used in the Septuagint. (See in that version, Ex. xvi, 30; Lev. xxvi, 35.) That this text refers principally to the heavenly state, must be admitted; yet, as referring thereto, its meaning is more definite than common readers are aware. For as the precise import of σαββατισμὸς is a keeping or enjoying of the Sabbath; so, as applied to the world of glory, it illustrates very impressively the peculiar nature of its employments and enjoyments. In other words, it shows that they will be like to those of a Sabbath (i. e. of one rightly sanctified) on earth. It surely

becomes us, then, in the application of this thought, to inquire whether we love the Sabbath, and its appropriate duties, on earth; whether we can truly call them *a delight*. (Isa. lviii, 13.) If we cannot so say, and so feel; if, on the contrary, from weariness with, and dislike to the exercises of this holy day, and from worldly mindedness, we are for saying, "When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat," (Amos viii, 5); if such be the case with us, dreadful is our state, presumptuous are all our hopes for future happiness. For, obviously, if we have no relish for the entertainments of our earthly Sabbaths, we cannot have any for the similar and more spiritual ones of the celestial sabbatism!

#### VERSE 12.

"For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

By the *word* of God, here mentioned, the written word, the Bible, is generally supposed to be meant. And though the term *λογός* be used in at least sixteen different senses or shades of meaning, and frequently means the Lord Jesus Christ himself; yet that, in this text, it denotes the written word, or denotes that primarily and principally, is very probable, especially because the epithets here used, are in fact, and with peculiar propriety, applicable to the holy scriptures. Most of the language here used is metaphorical, and very strong, but not too strong. Ask the Christian, who has "*tasted the good word of God*," and he will tell you so. To every such an one, the written word has been indeed "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit," &c. or, (as it is expressed, 1 Thess. ii, 13), it "worketh effectually in them that believe." The degree of its effectual operation is, however, very different in different believers; as different as are the degrees of that sanctification which they respectively have experienced. It is equally true, that in every instance of its being effectual on either saints or sinners, "the excellency of the power is of God, and not of man;" nor even of the written word itself. It is the Holy Spirit, and that only,

which, co-operating with the word, renders it effectual for the “casting down of imaginations, and of every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,” and for “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Cor. x, 5.) It may be added, that this instrumental efficacy of the scriptures on their own hearts and lives, is to believers an intuitive and decisive proof of their divine original.

#### CHAP. V, 4.

“And no man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”

It may be thought by some, that any attempt to elucidate this text is lost, or at least unnecessary labor, because its true meaning may be said to be already evident; and (what renders criticism the less necessary) self-evident also. But what then is this evident, this self-evident meaning? It is easy to tell what it is not, and as easy to prove, that by ignorant enthusiasts, this text has been misinterpreted, and perverted to very bad purposes. It has been understood and represented, it seems, as teaching that there must be a kind of passivity on our part, and a kind of miraculous, or at least extraordinary agency and vocation, on God's part, in our induction into the christian ministry; that personal study and labor in storing the mind with useful human knowledge, say of the languages, history, philosophy, &c. is not at all necessary to qualify one to be an useful minister; that the young man, or whoever else he be, needs not, or should not, be active in such preparatory studies, and much less in actually entering the ministry; that in this sense he should not take such an honor to himself; but that, on the contrary, he must wait until he has a divine call; must remain perhaps at the plough, or at the anvil, or behind the counter, until God calls him to preach; and must then go immediately, and preach the kingdom of God, not conferring with flesh and blood, &c. &c. But it is time to show what the meaning of this text is. And for this purpose let it be observed,

1st. That the honor or official station intended in this place, is not that of a common priest under the law, nor of a common minister under the gospel; but solely of the Jewish *high priest*. Whatever, therefore, may be intended by

not taking this honor to one's self, and by being called of God thereto, as was Aaron, this passage has no *primary*, direct reference to christian preachers in these days.

2d. On supposition that it is referable, secondarily and consequentially, to such preachers, still the obviously necessary inquiry is, as before, what is meant by these expressions—"not taking this honor to one's self, and being called of God thereto?" Doubtless all those in our days, who ought to preach the gospel, are in a sense "called of God" to this work; but not in the sense that some suppose. Those extraordinary calls to the sacerdotal and other important offices, which were so frequent under the Jewish dispensation, and generally during the age of miracles, are not to be expected now. To be sure, we have a right to demand that those persons who make claim to them, should support their claim by such "mighty signs and wonders," as were exhibited by the prophets and apostles, in proof of their extraordinary commission. We may lay it down as a general truth, that God doth not call any man to any particular work, unless he be qualified for that work. To say the contrary, would amount to a practical denial both of his wisdom and of his goodness, in this respect. As the christian ministry is, in respect to the doctrines and subjects it treats of, its bearing on the present and future welfare of mankind, and its eternal consequences in other respects, by far the most important office ever committed to man, it is evident that no novice, nor ignorant person, can be properly qualified for it. And as from its peculiar nature, it is obvious that its appropriate duties can never be performed with any good degree of fidelity, except where the heart is right in the sight of God, it is equally evident that genuine personal piety is another indispensable qualification for it. In short, these two things, at least, are absolutely necessary to constitute any proper qualification for the work of the gospel ministry, and any real evidence that a man is called of God thereto, viz. an holy *desire* for the work, (1 Tim. iii, 1), and an *ability* for it, (2 Cor. iii, 6.) Of the first of these, the individual himself must be the judge; of the last, others must be the judges, and those, too, *qualified* to judge on this momentous subject.



## VERSE 7.

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.”

The apostle evidently refers in this place to the Lord Jesus Christ, and shows how he was employed during the time of his personal abode on the earth. The only particular in this text about which there is any difficulty, and the only one which needs illustration, is the last clause, viz. “and was heard in that he feared.” That Jesus Christ was heard in his prayers; that his prayers were accepted and answered by his heavenly Father, is certain from other passages of scripture. Jesus himself said, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always.” (John xi, 41, 42.) And so far, there is no difficulty either in understanding or in believing. But the question is, what does the apostle mean by saying, “He was heard *in that he feared*?” Some interpreters explain, or rather translate the clause, thus—“because of his piety.” The reason of this translation doubtless lies in the supposed meaning of the original terms here used, viz. ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλασείας; while, at the same time, the best of all reasons is thought to be hereby given, why his prayers and supplications should be heard and answered, viz. the piety with which they were offered. The word εὐλασεία is supposed to signify true piety, religious reverence, *godly fear*; and the preposition ἀπὸ is said to signify, sometimes, *for*, or *because of*. It is conceded that the Greek terms here employed are sometimes used in these senses. This same Greek noun is translated *godly fear*, in Heb. xii, 28. The Greek preposition here used is translated *for*, in Luke xix, 3; and *because of*, in Mat. xviii, 7. But εὐλασεία is not always used in this sense, even in scripture, and much less in classical Greek authors. (See in the Septuagint, Josh. xxii, 24, and in the Greek New Testament, Acts xxiii, 10.) And as to ἀπὸ, it is certain that its proper and most common signification is, *from*. Some ambiguity attends the original in this case; and our translators have preserved a corresponding ambiguity in their version. For the phrase “*in that he*

feared," may signify either *in as much as* he feared; or it may signify *in that thing*, in respect to that thing he feared. I suppose that the last of these phrases expresses what the apostle intended in this place. A more literal translation of this clause would be this—"he was heard from the fear;" meaning, as I suppose, Christ was heard and answered in respect to that thing which he feared, and was delivered from his fear. The word fear in this case denotes the *object* of fear. (See Professor Stuart, *in loco*.) In this sense is the term sometimes used in scripture. (Gen. xxxi, 42 : Isa. viii, 13.) In short, the meaning of this text seems to be this, viz : that in those agonising prayers and supplications which Jesus Christ offered to his Father, during his abode on earth, and especially in the garden of Gethsemane, (Mat. xxvi, 39—44 : Mark xiv, 32—39 : Luke xxii, 41—46), he was heard by his Father in, or in respect to, that thing which he feared, viz. the object of his fear; and was by Him delivered from that great evil which he feared. The question now arises, what was that thing which Christ feared, in respect to which he was heard, and from which he was delivered? It seems it could not be his sufferings themselves, whether of mind or body; not even his final sufferings on the cross, because from these he was not delivered. Nor is it to be supposed, that Christ ever did (on the whole, and all things considered) wish and pray to be delivered from them. To say he did, is the same with saying that Christ did, on the whole, wish and pray to be delivered and excused from accomplishing that great work, for which he came into the world; in the remote anticipation of which he felt such an intense interest and delight, (Ps. xl, 6—10), and during the actual accomplishment of which he felt himself so much straitened, and impelled to proceed, until it should be completed. (Luke xii, 50.) The sufferings of Christ, and especially his final sufferings on the cross, were an essential part of that work which Christ, as redeemer, had to perform. They were absolutely necessary for that purpose. (Mat. xvi, 21 : Luke xxiv, 26.) The fulfilment of many scripture prophecies, the salvation of sinners, and the glory of God, as displayed in their salvation—all depended on the sufferings of Christ. So far as we can see, these immense-

ly important objects could not have been attained, if Christ had not suffered and died, and if he had not suffered and died in the manner he did. If, then, Christ be such a character, so disinterested, so regardless of personal considerations, as the scriptures represent him, (John vi, 38 : Rom. xv, 3), and as his whole life shows him to have been ; so much bent on advancing the glory of God, in the salvation of sinners ; it is incredible that he ever should have wished to avoid those sufferings, i. e. on the whole, and all things considered. Nor does the account we have of Christ's prayer in the garden, contradict this view of the subject. Christ was man, as well as God. As man, he could feel, under bodily or mental pain, whether actually endured or in prospect, as other men feel, and as all intelligent and all sensitive beings feel. No intelligent being, holy or unholy, can feel reconciled to pain, *as pain*, in itself considered. As man, as partaker of flesh and blood, with all their innocent sensibilities and properties, Christ doubtless felt a strong aversion to those sufferings, which had in a degree befallen him in life, which were increased in the garden, and which were soon to be consummated on the cross. No wonder that his human nature should for a moment sink, as it were, in view of them, and cry out, " O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me : Nevertheless, (he adds), not as I will, but as thou wilt." The account we have in John xii, 27, 28, is perfectly natural, and just what we might expect from such a character in such circumstances :—" Now is my soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour : But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." This shows, that whatever was the repugnance which the human nature of Christ felt to the troubles he then endured, and to the still greater ones in prospect—he, on the whole, chose to go forward. In view of " the joy set before him," he cheerfully " endured the cross, *despising* the shame," knowing that these afflictions, which, though heavy, were of short duration, would " work out an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory," not only for himself, but for " an innumerable multitude" of ransomed souls. But whatever we may suppose Christ's feelings to have been in relation to his suffer-

ings in life, in the garden, and on the cross, we know that in fact he was not delivered from them. If any should suppose that the burden of Christ's prayer in the garden was, that on the whole he might avoid the death of the cross, with all its concomitant and aggravating evils; still, he must allow that his prayer in this respect was *not heard*. Christ's mere sufferings, then, were not the thing in which, or in respect to which, he was heard, and from which he was delivered. But the thing in which, or in respect to which, Christ was heard, appears to have been *his fainting and failing* under those sufferings; so that he should fail of accomplishing completely the work which the Father had given him to do. As man, "tempted in all points like as we are," and harrassed by the "fiery darts of the devil," he must be supposed to have been, at times, capable of solicitude from this source; notwithstanding the assurance he had to the contrary before the trial came, and before he became incarnate. (Isa. l, 5—8.) In respect to this thing, he was heard. From this dreadful evil he was delivered.

#### VERSE 12.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."

The connection of this passage with the preceding part of the chapter should be carefully remembered. The apostle had been speaking of the Jewish high priest, as a type and illustration of Jesus Christ, who was "called of God an high priest, after the order of Melchisedek." On this subject, he enlarges with equal pleasure to himself and advantage to the reader, until he comes to the 11th verse. But there his ardor cools, and he very abruptly and reluctantly leaves for the present his main subject; not because it was exhausted, (for he had yet many things to say upon it), but on account of the inattention and indifference of these Hebrews. What a calamity it is, when such instructive and lively preachers have to speak to such ignorant and stupid hearers! But to the passage itself. "When for the time," i. e. on account of, or in respect to the time. The time



here mentioned may denote the then present peculiar time, as a time of persecution, when of course christian instruction, support, and consolation, would be particularly needed by believers ; or rather, as is most probable, the time and very favorable opportunities these Hebrews had enjoyed, for growth in divine knowledge. "Ye ought to be teachers." The apostle did not mean, that, as a people, they ought to be teachers, *officially*, but in the sense intended in Col. iii, 16. "Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." How forgetful, then, had these Hebrews been, of what they had once learned ; and what a glass is here, for many modern hearers of the word to see themselves in ! "First principles," &c. Christianity is a science consisting of some simple and elementary truths, here called first principles, and of others more abstruse and sublime, and not so easily understood, called elsewhere "the deep things of God." The apostle adds—"and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." As on this clause there has been much conversation, considerable debate, and after all quite a diversity of opinion, it seems necessary to attend a little to it, to ascertain, if possible, its true meaning. And to do this most effectually, it would be well for us, if, instead of bewildering ourselves in speculation, we would only attend more closely to the simple metaphor here used by the apostle, viz. "milk and strong meat." Milk is a thing easily and quickly digested ; strong meat, not so easily nor so readily. Hence, as says the apostle, "Every one that useth milk is a babe ; but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age ;" i. e. milk is proper for babes ; strong meat for persons of adult age, whose digestive organs have been strengthened and improved by long exercise. Now, keeping this metaphor in mind, we may instantly perceive, that what the apostle primarily intended by "milk," was those doctrines which are plain, simple, and easy to be understood. Equally evident it is, that what he intended by "strong meat," was not so much those doctrines which are peculiarly *offensive to the natural heart*, as those which are *hard to be understood*—hard to be digested by the mind ; such doctrines, indeed, as he had just been speaking of ; those rela-



ting to the person, character, and official work of the true Melchisedek. The doctrines, therefore, of total depravity, of eternal election, &c. cannot come under the denomination of strong meat; or, to be sure, no further nor otherwise than as they are *hard to be understood*.

#### CHAP. VII, 1.

“For this Melchisedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God,” &c.

The writer’s object in the present work requires merely that he should show, if possible, who and what this Melchisedek was. Now, on this difficult subject there are but two opinions: The one, that he was a man, contemporary with Abraham; the other, that he was Jesus Christ himself. In support of the opinion that he was Christ, it is alledged,

1st. That he was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life. These characteristics, it is said, are predicable of Jesus Christ only; or at least of him, with unspeakably more propriety than of any other person. But if we understand them literally, the same sort of difficulty will attend their application to the *man* Christ Jesus, as would attend their application to any other man. The person who brought forth bread and wine, and blessed Abraham, (Gen. xiv, 18, 19), is evidently spoken of as a man. If, therefore, Christ were that person, Christ must here be referred to in his human nature only: But surely as man, Christ was not without mother, nor without descent, nor without beginning of days, nor without end of life. If these expressions should not be understood literally, but only as teaching generally that Melchisedek was without any recorded genealogy, so that his genealogy could not be traced; why, then, the difficulty not only continues, but becomes greater than before, for Christ’s genealogy is distinctly traced by both Matthew and Luke. But,

2d. Melchisedek was greater than Abraham: Hence it is inferred that he must have been the Christ. But this circumstance alone does not prove that he was the Christ. Those who think it does, must of course proceed on the supposition, that there was not, and could not be, any mere

man on earth, in Abraham's time, greater than he. But this certainly is *mere* supposition. The greatness attributed to Melchisedek in the context, was not so much personal as *official*; it arose chiefly from his being king in Salem, and priest of the most high God. Now, in the light of scripture, no office is so great and so honorable as the latter of these; and surely, in reference to solemn consequences, both here and hereafter, none is so important. Now, Melchisedek was such a priest, but Abraham was not; there is, therefore, no necessity of supposing that Christ is the person here meant, merely because this person was superior to Abraham; for in the *official* sense, at least, i. e. as king in Salem, and priest of the most high God, Melchisedek must have been superior to Abraham, even on supposition that he was a mere man.

3d. It is said of Melchisedek, verse 8, "he liveth;" yea, in verse 24, that "he continueth for ever." Hence, some may conclude that he was Christ himself. But all this may mean nothing more than that he liveth in his antitype, and that his priesthood continueth, much in the same manner as the martyrs are said to revive and reign in their successors. (Rev. xx, 4.)

That this Melchisedek was not Jesus Christ himself, appears, because he is said, verse 3, to be "made *like unto* the Son of God." He could not then have been the Son of God himself. Again, in verses 15, 16, 17, we read, "After the similitude of Melchisedek there ariseth another priest, (i. e. another than either an Aaronic priest, or that Melchisedek who met Abraham), who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For He testifieth, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek." By the other priest, Christ undoubtedly is intended. Christ, then, is here said to be after the *similitude*, after the *order* of Melchisedek. He could not, therefore, be that Melchisedek himself; but who, what particular man he was, it is impossible for us to tell. The Jews, and some christian writers, have supposed he was Shem, one of the sons of Noah. But Shem, surely, could not have been properly said to be without father, without mother, without descent; having neither beginning of days

nor end of life. He had a father and a mother; his genealogy had been distinctly traced, and was well known; and not only had he a beginning of days and an end of life, but it was known when and where he was born, and when he died.—But though we cannot know certainly and exactly who this Melchisedek was, otherwise than that he was some great and good man, contemporary with Abraham, we may know *what* he was. Though he was not the Christ, he was an illustrious *type* of Christ. As such, the apostle represents him in several particulars. At present, I shall select only two, because these are the most prominent, and may comprehend all others. Melchisedek, then, was a pre-eminent *type* of Christ, as king and as priest.

1st. As king. He was king in or of Salem, i. e. king of peace; for such is the import of the Hebrew word. Further: He was, as his characteristic name imports, king of righteousness, or a righteous king. As king, then, what an impressive type was he of him who is set as king on the holy hill of Zion, (Ps. ii, 6), who is emphatically “the prince of peace,” (Isa. ix, 6), and who reigns in righteousness. (Isa. xxxii, 1.)

2d. As priest. Melchisedek was priest of the most high God. Eminently so was our Lord Jesus Christ, the high priest of our profession. Melchisedek had no predecessor in office. In this respect, he was *without descent*; and in this respect, how strikingly did he typify Him “whose descent was not counted from them,” (verse 6), i. e. from the sons of Levi; but who “pertained to another tribe, of which Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.” (Verse 14.) Once more: As Melchisedek had no predecessor, so he had no *successor*, otherwise than in his great Antitype. Neither has Christ any successor: “Because he continueth for ever, he hath an unchangeable priesthood,” or a priesthood which doth not pass away. He is “consecrated for evermore:” For “the Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.” (Ps. cx, 4.) Before this subject is dismissed, it is proper to remark, that the obscurity, and mystery, and unsatisfactoriness, which attend the scriptural account of Melchisedek, seem to have been *intentional* on the part of the Holy Spirit;

in order that this person might the more fitly represent him whose generation none can declare, (Isa. lviii, 3), and who in this respect, as well as in many others, may be properly called the "Wonderful." (Isa. ix, 6.) Let us not 'exercise ourselves in things too high for us;' but let it be our main desire and endeavor, to secure an interest in the *true* Melchisedek; for "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

#### CHAP. VIII, 8—12.

"For finding fault with them, he saith, behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."

In the first edition of this work, the expression, "finding fault with them," was explained, as referring to the people of Israel, and as meaning that God found fault with them. In support of this interpretation, it was remarked,

1st. That the Greek pronoun, translated *them*, was masculine, and of course could not, according to the rules of syntax, agree with or refer to *διαθήκαις*, the Greek word for covenants, which is in the feminine gender; and

2d. That it is absurd to suppose, that God should really find fault with covenants of his own institution. It is, however, the opinion of some good commentators, as Henry and Scott, that it was the covenants themselves with which God found fault. On more mature reflection, I am inclined to think they are correct in this interpretation, as this seems best to suit the apostle's main scope in the context; though



there are some difficulties attending it, and especially the grammatical difficulty just mentioned, and which occurs and is the same in all the editions of the New Testament which I have consulted. But the point here which chiefly needs elucidation, is the new covenant itself. What is intended by this covenant? Every intelligent reader must instantly perceive, that a correct decision as to this matter, is of great practical importance; for it will have a direct bearing on the contested subject of infant baptism. How frequently have the advocates for the continued existence of the Abrahamic covenant been answered by their opponents in this way, viz: 'that covenant has been utterly abolished;' and in proof of this, how frequently have the latter alledged the passages now under consideration! For hence, say they, it is evident that an entirely new covenant, and another covenant than that made with Abraham, is made with Christians—the old Abrahamic covenant having been abolished. For does not the apostle say, (verse 13), "In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old; now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away?" Hence it is concluded that the great foundation of pedobaptism, that which Pedobaptists themselves acknowledge as such, viz. the Abrahamic covenant continued, is entirely swept away. But is it so indeed? Let us examine the paragraph more minutely. It is manifestly a quotation from Jer. xxxi, 31—35. For the explanation of this very instructive portion of scripture, the following remarks may be useful:—

1st. The new covenant, here mentioned, is a covenant established by Jehovah with his people in gospel times, and, as will appear in the sequel, is none other than the christian dispensation itself. For the apostle here quotes this prophecy from Jeremiah, and applies it *to* gospel times; which he would not have done, were not the prophecy or promise itself to be fulfilled *in* those times.

2d. This new covenant is here directly opposed, not to the covenant made with Abraham, but to that covenant which Jehovah made with the Jews, in the day when he took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt. Both the prophet and the apostle, in speaking of this new covenant, say it was to be "not according to the covenant



that God made with their fathers, in the day when he took them by the hand, to lead or bring them out of the land of Egypt." The phrase, "in the day," or in that day, as used in the scriptures, is not always so precise in its meaning as it is when used by us. We mean thereby, that *very day*—that very space of twenty-four hours. But the scriptures frequently intend by the phrase, *about that time*; or a time, a day, not far remote. (See, as specimens, Gen. ii, 17: 1 Kings ii, 37.) In the last passage, we have the following address of Solomon to Shimei:—"For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die." But Shimei was not put to death on that very day, though he was not long afterwards. The above remarks may help us to understand the true meaning of the phrase, "in the day," in the text before us. Manifestly, it is not to be understood literally, and in its most restricted sense; for in that self-same day that they went out of the land of Egypt, Jehovah made no covenant at all with them, either new or old. But it means, *about that time*. In a word, it refers to and means that period, when "Moses brought forth the people out of the camp, to meet with God. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." (Ex. xix, 17, 18.) The covenant, then, here meant as that to which this new covenant is opposed, is not the Abrahamic, but the *Sinai* covenant. This conclusion is both justified and established by the fact, that the great and principal object of the apostle, in this epistle, was to distinguish between law and gospel; to illustrate the superiority of the *christian* to the *legal* dispensation, and more definitely still to prove to the Hebrews, that the covenant which God made with their fathers at Sinai, and in the wilderness, and on which the whole fabric of Judaism was built, had been abolished, and had been succeeded by the christian dispensation; and so, to prevail on them to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free." On the whole, it is evident that this covenant was not called new in respect to the Abrahamic covenant, as though it was opposed to that, or as though the introduction of this new covenant would of

course cause the Abrahamic covenant to “vanish away,” and be no more. But it was called new in respect to the Sinai covenant, or that covenant which God made with their fathers, in the day when he brought them out of Egypt; so that when this new covenant and dispensation should be introduced, the Sinai covenant and Jewish dispensation would cease. The covenant God made with the Israelites at Sinai, was a totally distinct thing from that which he had previously made with their father Abraham. Nor did the Sinai covenant disannul the Abrahamic covenant. Hence says St. Paul, (Gal. iii, 17):—“And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” In short, the paragraph of scripture before us, affords not the least evidence that the Abrahamic covenant has ever been abolished. The mere fact that the Mosaic or Jewish dispensation had been abrogated, and has been succeeded by the Christian dispensation, is no proof that that peculiar covenant which God made with Abraham and his household, *as such*, and in and through him, with other true believers and their households, *as such*, has ever been abolished. Pedobaptists, at least, believe that that covenant still continues, and that it will continue until its capital and glorious promise, “In thee shall all families, all nations be blessed,” shall have been fulfilled.

3d. Further to explain this new covenant, it should be observed, that it includes something *internal*, as well as something external; an internal, personal change of heart and character, as well as an outward divine dispensation. The christian covenant, or dispensation, is called “the ministration of the Spirit.” (2 Cor. iii, 8.) The Holy Spirit was to be given far more liberally in gospel times, than it had ever been under the law; and the consequence of this would be, the saving conversion of vast multitudes unto God. Hence it is said, in the paragraph of scripture now before us—“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts;

and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

4th. The time to which this glorious promise has principal respect, and in which it was to have its principal accomplishment, is evidently yet future. Thus much we must believe, whether the phrases, "house of Israel," and "house of Judah," be understood in their literal sense, or as denoting generally the *true* Israel of God; whether they be by birth Jews or Gentiles. For surely the time has not yet come, when it has become unnecessary for one man to teach his neighbor, and another man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord;" nor has the glorious day ever yet arrived among either Jews or Gentiles, (though we believe it surely will), when they have all known the Lord from the least even to the greatest.

#### CHAP. IX, 28.

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

Both the Greek word *ἀμαρτία*, and its corresponding Hebrew term, signify sometimes a *sin-offering*. The meaning of the latter part of this text seems to be, that when Christ shall appear the second time, it will be without a *sin-offering*—such an offering as he made at his first appearing, when "once in the end of the world, he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." When he appeared the first time, it was to *save* the world. When he shall appear the second time, it will be to *judge* the world. The passage may indeed be so interpreted, as to admit another shade of meaning, not different, however, materially, from the one given above, and amounting ultimately to the same thing. Thus; when Christ appeared the first time, it was to bear the sins of many; which implies something more than that he merely bore them away. He bore them *as a burden*, also. But when he shall appear the second time, it will be without bearing sin in any sense; not of course in the sense of personal guilt, and not in the sense of imputation neither; but, so far as his redeemed people are concerned, it will be to complete their salvation, by receiving

them to himself; that where he is, there they may be also. (John xiv, 3.)

CHAP. X, 4.

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

In view of this passage, it is natural to inquire, (and the inquiry is a very important one), how far the animal sacrifices under the law, or the atonements thereby made, availed for the good of those who offered them, or in whose behalf they were offered, and how far they did not. How often, in the account we have of the Mosaic ritual, do we read of an atonement's being made. How often is it said, that by sacrificing the animal which the transgressor brought, the priest made an atonement for him. Now, what sort of atonements were these? Were they *real* atonements, or *typical* atonements? From the well known general habits of thinking on this subject, it is believed that the answer to this question, which would be given by far the greatest part of Christians, would be, that they were typical only; that they were not in any sense real and efficacious atonements, but types only, and prefigurations of that great and really efficacious atonement, which the Lord Jesus was to make, and which he has since made, “by the sacrifice of himself.” Now, the truth is, that in one sense, those atonements were real; in another, only typical. They were real atonements, as it respected the *disabilities* occasioned to the Jew by his transgression of the Mosaic law, and as it respected those peculiar penal evils, to which, in consequence of such transgression, he became exposed. That in these respects they were *real* atonements, is evident from the fact, that in consequence, and by virtue of the sacrifice being offered, of the atonement being made, the transgressor was actually freed from those disabilities, and secured against the punishment threatened in that law, and which otherwise he must have endured. In this sense he was forgiven, agreeably to the promise so frequently repeated, “It shall be forgiven him.” So far, then, as respected the *Jewish law*, they were real atonements, and sufficient ones. But, in another view, those atoning sacrifices were essentially defective, and entirely insufficient. They “could



not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." (Heb. ix, 10.) They could not give the *conscience*, or the mind, peace and rest, so that the worshippers once purged (thereby), should have had no more conscience (or consciousness) of sin." (x, 2.) So far were they from doing this, that they served rather to aggravate their mental disquietude and distress, by bringing their past sins afresh to their remembrance. This was the case, especially, with those sacrifices which were offered once a year, on the great day of atonement. Hence the apostle says, "In those sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." (x, 4.) In the most important sense, therefore, those atonements were only types and prefigurations of the great atonement made by Jesus Christ. It was by this, only, that the justice of God could be fully satisfied; it was on this ground, or through this medium, only, that he could fully "declare his righteousness for the remission of sins;" so that he might be, at the same time, both "just, and the justifier of him that believeth." And it is only in the believing view of this great atonement, or of that precious blood-shedding, whereby Christ's atonement was made, that the consciences of men ever could be, or ever will be, really "purged from dead works, to serve the living God," so that they may enjoy any substantial peace and rest. Let us, then, turn our attention from the blood of bulls and of goats, which could not possibly take away sin, and "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

#### VERSES 26, 27.

"For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

It is well known by those who have been much conversant with soul-cases, that these texts have been the occasion of much perplexity and distress, to many persons of thoughtful mind and tender consciences. No matter how terrific this or any other part of the word of God becomes to the stupid and hardened sinner, so that it only leads him to flee from the wrath to come, and to inquire, with the trembling jailor,



“What must I do to be saved?” But how deplorable it is, that the heart of the righteous should needlessly be made sad, whom God hath not made sad; or that any weary, heavy laden and anxious souls should be left in a state of gloom, and almost of despair, in consequence of misunderstanding these texts of scripture; as probably has been the case with some such. At any rate, it is important that these passages should be rightly interpreted and understood. And for this purpose, we must remember to whom this epistle was written. It was written to the *Hebrews*, or Jews. It was proper that in writing to them, the apostle should use such a diction as was adapted to their peculiar character and state, and had some reference to the peculiarities of Judaism. This he does frequently in this epistle; and there is an instance of it in the texts now before us. The apostle here refers to the two sorts of sins acknowledged among the Jews; those of *ignorance*, oversight, or inadvertence, and those of *presumption*. Of the first, see Lev. iv, 27, 28. “And if any one of the common people sin through *ignorance*, while he doeth something against any of the commandments of the Lord, concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty; or if his sin, which he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; then he shall bring his offering,” &c. (See, also, verses 2, 13, 22, of this same chapter, and Num. xv, 27—29.) Of the second sort of sins, see Num. xv, 30, 31. “But the soul that doeth ought *presumptuously*, (whether he be born in the land, or a stranger), the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.” Now, it is a *presumptuous* sinning, that is referred to by the apostle in this place. Presumptuous sins are sins committed against light and knowledge; and it is the fact that they are thus committed, which makes them presumptuous. But the sin here intended is evidently of this character, because it is represented as committed after having received the knowledge of the truth. The word “*wilfully*,” or willingly, (for the original will admit either translation), must then, in this place, signify deliberately, obstinately, presumptuously.

As to the particular kind of presumptuous sinning here intended by the apostle, it is evident from the tenor of this epistle, that it was *apostacy from Christianity*. To this sin the Hebrews were peculiarly exposed; they were continually in danger of apostatising from Christianity, not only from the persecutions they suffered from their own countrymen, on account of their christian profession, but also from their own remaining undue attachment to the Mosaic dispensation. Hence they were in constant danger of renouncing Christianity for Judaism. This would have been in them an aggravated and presumptuous sin indeed, seeing they had already received the knowledge of the truth; had been so far enlightened into the evidences and doctrines of Christianity. And they might be sure, that if they should thus sin wilfully; if they should, either to avoid persecution, or for any other reason, renounce Christianity for Judaism, there would remain no more sacrifice for their sins. The Jewish sacrifices had already lost their efficacy, to avert even national judgments. Indeed, while they remained, and were regularly offered according to divine appointment, they could never "take away sin," or "make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." They could never make that atonement, the believing view of which would give substantial peace of mind. Moreover, it behoved the Hebrews to remember, that the whole legal economy, including all its sacrifices, was "ready to vanish away," or rather had already ceased, as to its validity and peculiar efficacy. The result was, that if they should apostatise from Christianity, and renounce Christ's atoning sacrifice, there would be *no* sacrifice whatever for their sins. Such appears to be substantially the meaning of these texts. (See Stuart on the Hebrews.) Doubtless, however, they may be properly considered as by implication a solemn warning against sinning deliberately, obstinately, and presumptuously, in any way.

## VERSE 29.

"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith

he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace."

The only clause in this verse, on which I shall now particularly remark, is the following, viz. "wherewith he was sanctified." The question is, who is meant by the pronoun *he*, in this place? Answer—Jesus Christ is probably meant. The ordinary rules of syntax favor this construction; for the Son of God is the nearest antecedent. But is it proper to say, that Jesus Christ was sanctified? In reply, it must be observed, that the original word translated sanctified, is used in the scriptures in two senses. Both *KADASH*, in the Hebrew, and *ἀγιάζω*, in the Greek, signify sometimes to make holy, in the *spiritual* sense of the expression; sometimes to devote, dedicate, or consecrate, to some religious or important purpose. In the first mentioned sense, it cannot with truth be said, that our Lord was sanctified by the blood of the covenant; for the saying so would manifestly imply, that previously to such sanctification, he was unholy and sinful; a sentiment utterly repugnant to the scriptures, which characterise him as holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and as knowing no sin. But in the last mentioned sense, our Lord was sanctified, i. e. he was devoted, consecrated to God, in the mediatorial work. He was called a Nazarene; and though his enemies applied this epithet to him reproachfully, yet (as was the case with the inscription on the cross) the Holy Ghost designed it as significant and characteristical; for, in the true sense of the word, our Saviour was a Nazarene or Nazarite: He was *separated* not only from sin, but also (after his public life commenced) from all mere worldly employments and concerns, and was devoted exclusively to the work which the Father had given him to do. Hence his language to the Jews, (John x, 36), "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world," &c. Hence his remark in his intercessory prayer, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself." But if the pronoun *he*, in this verse, should be supposed to signify a mere man, and of course an apostate from christianity; still, on account of the two-fold sense in which the word *sanctify* is used, it will be very difficult to

draw from hence any substantial objection against the preservation and final perseverance of the saints.

#### CHAP. XI, 4.

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.”

The word here translated “more excellent” signifies merely *more*, it being in the comparative degree from the word *πολλὸς*, much. The passage, then, exactly translated, would run thus:—‘By faith Abel offered unto God more, or more of a sacrifice, than Cain.’ True, Abel’s sacrifice was more excellent than Cain’s; but the apostle seems to have meant something more definite than what is expressed by the general phrase, “more excellent.” He meant that Abel’s oblation partook more of the nature of a *proper* sacrifice than Cain’s. Additional proof that such was his meaning will appear, from attending to the history of the affair, as recorded in Gen. iv, 3—5: “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.” You see, then, that Cain’s oblation was *vegetable*; he brought of the “fruit of the ground.” But Abel’s oblation was *animal*; it being of the “firstlings of his flock;” and hence it had a more exact resemblance than Cain’s, to that great and efficacious sacrifice which Jesus Christ afterwards made of himself, when he “died, the just for the unjust, and bore our sins in his own body on the tree.” The *matter*, therefore, of Abel’s oblation, made it more of the nature of a proper sacrifice than Cain’s; for Cain’s oblation was a proper meat-offering; but Abel’s was a proper sin-offering. And what a difference was there, also, in the *manner* in which these two brethren brought their offerings unto God, and how much did Abel excel Cain in this respect! For “by faith” Abel offered his sacrifice: But not so did Cain. He “was of that wicked one.” (1 John iii, 12.)



## VERSE 6.

“But without faith, it is impossible to please Him,” &c.

This scripture needs to be enforced, far more than to be explained. It may, however, be properly observed, that the faith here spoken of means, directly, faith in God; as is evident from the immediately subsequent words—“for he that cometh to God must believe that he is,” &c.

## CHAP. XII, 1, 2.

“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

The connective word “wherefore,” plainly shows that these verses are a kind of inference from the preceding chapter, and that of course, by the great cloud of witnesses, we are to understand the ancient worthies there enumerated, who may be said to be witnesses in a two-fold sense; witnesses in the proper sense of the word, as they did on earth, and do now, bear *testimony* to the truth and cause of God; eye-witnesses, also, or spectators of the race run by Christians, and of the manner in which they run that race. By the way, what is here said of those ancient worthies, viz. that they are still witnesses, and that Christians are compassed about with them, plainly implies that those worthies are still alive, i. e. that their souls are still alive. This passage is, therefore, to be classed among those other passages of scripture, which teach the doctrine of a separate state; i. e. a state of conscious existence after death, and between death and the resurrection, when the soul is *separate* from the body. But what are we to understand by “*the sin which so easily besets us*?” Some understand thereby, some *constitutional* sin, as it is called; i. e. some sinful infirmity or predominant sinful propensity, peculiar to individuals, and occasioned by the peculiar temperament of their minds or bodies, or of both. Such propensity is supposed to be in one, the irascible; in another, the covetous; in another, the sensual, &c. Now, that every Christian and every man has some besetting sin, in *this* sense of the terms, is proba-



bly true ; and equally true it is, that every one should lay it aside, and diligently watch and pray against it. It seems, however, that this could not be what the apostle chiefly intended by the phrase in this place ; for this same easily besetting sin is represented as besetting, at the same time, *all* the Hebrew Christians, and himself among the rest. But such constitutional sin as has been mentioned, is peculiar to individuals. At least, it would be very absurd to suppose, that precisely the same constitutional sin or infirmity could be attached to a whole community, consisting of many hundreds or thousands, among whom must exist and appear a vast variety, in respect to constitutional temperament of both mind and body. *Unbelief*, particularly, as including the danger of final apostacy, appears to be what the apostle intended by this sin. For this is, in fact, the sin which easily and eminently besets Christians generally. (Mark xvi, 14 : Luke xvii, 5 : Heb. iii, 12.) And it may well be supposed, that it would easily beset Christians in the apostolic age, particularly ; for that was an age of persecution, and Christians would be in peculiar danger of apostatising from christianity, through fear of sufferings. No wonder, if, in such circumstances, such fiery trials, unbelief should have easily beset them, and they should have found it hard work to believe in the promise, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee ;” and so to believe in it as to say, “The Lord is my helper : I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (Ch. xiii, 5, 6.) Again ; from the connection, and from the general scope of the apostle, it is manifest that the sin here mentioned is directly opposed, both to the virtue which had been so accurately defined and so highly celebrated in the preceding chapter, which was faith, and also to the duty immediately urged, viz. “looking unto Jesus,” which, also, is faith. Hence arises additional evidence that the sin itself is unbelief, as above explained.—Before we leave this subject, it is natural to reflect, what a solemn and energetic motive to activity and diligence, in running the christian race, is here set before us ! There is evidently, throughout the whole of this first verse, an allusion to such races as were performed at the Isthmian and other ancient games. (See the notes on 1 Cor. ix, 24—26.) *We* Christians, al-

so, like those runners, are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, both in heaven and on earth, and perhaps by the spirits of some of our near departed relatives and friends. Like them, *we* must lay aside, and throw away, every thing which would retard our progress, such as our sins, worldly cares, &c.; and as they pressed forward toward the mark, having their eyes constantly fixed on the goal, the end of their race; so must *we* press forward, "looking unto Jesus;" or, as the original imports, looking off, i. e. looking off from every created object, unto Jesus, who is not only the author, but perfecter of our faith, and who still proclaims, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. ii, 10.)

#### VERSE 17.

"For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

The question is, what is meant by the pronoun *it*, in this text? To what does it refer—to the blessing, or to repentance? In other words, what was it which Esau so earnestly sought, but could not find? I answer—repentance. This appears from the very structure of the passage; for the first clause of this verse is wholly distinct from the last, and is accordingly separated from it in our bibles by a colon; and of course, as *μετανοίας* (repentance) is the nearest, so it is the only proper antecedent to the pronoun *αὐτήν*, (it.) *Repentance*, then, was the object which Esau sought, but could not find; no, not "though he sought it carefully with tears." But how can this be consistent with such scriptures as these:—"Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened?" (Mat vii, 7, 8.) In reply, it must be observed, that the repentance Esau sought, was repentance not in himself, but in his father; and that the repentance he sought for in his father, was not of an evangelical and spiritual, but wholly of a worldly kind. But to understand this matter fully, we must go back to the history to which this passage refers. "And when Esau heard the words of his father, (i. e. his declara-

tion that he had blessed Jacob, and that he should be blessed), he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, bless me, even me also, O my father. And he (Isaac) said, thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. And he (Esau) said, is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: He took away my birthright, and behold now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered, and said unto Esau, behold I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given unto him for servants, and with corn and wine have I sustained him; and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? And Esau said unto his father, hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept." (Gen. xxvii, 34—39.) How earnest was the son; but how inflexible the father! Esau sought repentance in his father's mind, but could not find it, though he sought it carefully with tears. He earnestly, though unsuccessfully, sought to make his father revoke the blessing he had given to Jacob, and give it to himself. The precise meaning of the word *μετανοια* is, a change of mind; and the evident meaning of this passage is, that Esau could not *change his father's mind*, in respect to the benediction. The patriarch had already blessed Jacob; "yea, and he should be blessed."

#### VERSE 18.

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest."

The apostle did not mean what some may conclude from his words that he meant, viz. that Mount-Sinai might be touched *lawfully*, or safely, and with impunity. The contrary appears from Ex. xix, 12, where the Israelites were expressly forbidden to touch the mount, even the border of it, on pain of death. The Greek word here used may be translated, and must here mean, *tangible*—the object of touch, or that which is capable of being touched. In this sense, only, is St. Paul to be understood, when he says of Mount-Sinai, that it "might be touched;" and we may

hence perceive, that there is not in reality the least inconsistency between what Moses and St. Paul say in relation to this matter.

#### VERSE 24.

—“And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.”

In many respects does the blood of Christ speak better things than that of Abel, but chiefly in this : The latter cried for vengeance, (Gen. iv, 10) ; the former crieth for mercy. Its language is, “Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.”

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### JAMES.

#### CHAPTER I, VERSE 13.

“Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted with evil ; neither tempteth he any man.”

But how can this text be reconciled with Gen. xxii, 1 :—“And it came to pass, after these things, that God did tempt Abraham?” The original word translated *tempt*, *tempteth*, is the same in the Greek New Testament and in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament ; and this very circumstance seems, at first, to increase the difficulty. But there is no contradiction between these two texts. It has been already remarked, in the criticism on 2 Cor. xii, 16, that words the same in the original, and in our translation too, are used sometimes in a good sense, sometimes in a bad one. Now, the Greek word *πειράζω* is one of that class of words. It is used in a good sense, in John vi, 6 : 2 Cor. xiii, 5 : Heb. xi, 17. It is used in a bad sense, in Mat. xvi, 1, and xxii, 18, 35 : 1 Cor. x, 9 : 1 Thess. iii, 5. As used in the good sense, it signifies merely to *prove*, *examine*, make trial of ; but as used in the bad sense, it signifies to *solicit to sin*. We may hence perceive the true meaning, and at the same time the mutual consistency, of the two passages in James and Genesis. When Moses says, “God did tempt Abraham,” he means simply—He *tried*, *proved* him. When James says, “Neither tempteth He any man,” he means—He doth not *solicit any one to sin*. In this last



sense, "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." (Verse 14.)

### CHAP. II, 24.

"Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

So says St. James. But St. Paul seems to speak quite differently, for he says, in Rom. iii, 20—"Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight;" and again still more definitely and fully in verse 28—"Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." Now, on first inspection, it is evident that either these two apostles contradict each other; or they must speak of different *kinds* of justification. The latter is undoubtedly the truth. St. Paul is speaking of justification *before God*. His words are, "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight;" or, (as the original exactly signifies), *before Him*. But James treats of justification in another view. His main object is to show, that true faith is not a fruitless principle; that faith and works must and will go together; and that whenever any supposed faith is not accompanied by good works, it is worthless, yea, is no faith. For thus he speaks:—"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works; can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so, faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: The devils (demons) also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (Verses 14—20.) The doctrines of gratuitous justification before God, and of salvation by free sovereign grace, as taught by St. Paul, had been abused by some in the apostolic age, (as they have been by many in our own), and had been perverted to very bad purposes.



(See Jude, verse 4.) The language of these men has ever been to this purpose—‘If the doctrine of eternal personal election be true, and we are saved by mere grace, then works are unnecessary, so far, at least, as respects our own salvation.’ Now, it was probably with a view to such abuse and perversion of the doctrines of grace, and to prevent them effectually, if possible, in time to come, that St. James became such a strenuous advocate for *works*. On the whole, in the case before us, there is no contradiction between these two apostles. Paul pleads for the reality; James for the visibility. In a word, the former intends justification *before God*; the latter, justification *before men*.

#### CHAP. v, 16.

—“The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;” literally, the *invrought* prayer, i. e. the prayer wrought in his soul by the Holy Spirit.

Though, however, the original word must express in this place, primarily and directly, not so much the exercises and agency of the creature in prayer, as divine influence, producing such exercises and agency; yet the former are also referred to, viz. the personal earnestness of the righteous man in prayer. Thus much, to be sure, appears from the instance the apostle immediately mentions, in illustration of what he had just before asserted, viz. the instance of Elijah. “Elias (or Elijah) was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly—prayed with a prayer, (a Hebrew idiom), that it might not rain,” &c. Have we ever prayed in this manner?

### I. PETER.

#### CHAPTER I, VERSE 5.

“Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.”

The Greek *φρουρουμένων*, translated *kept*, is properly a military or rather a martial term, and signifies kept as *in a garrison*. A circumstance, this, showing in a very impressive manner, how strongly believers are fortified in their *strong*

*hold*, the Lord Jesus. They are kept or *garrisoned* by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. How does the expression guard against presumption on the one hand, and indolence on the other ! We must not presume on “our own power or holiness,” as though they were sufficient to keep us. No ; it is by the power of God that we are kept. But what shall we say, then ? That there is nothing for us to do ? Far be it that we should say or think so. We must *believe* ; must use the appointed means of grace ; must work out our own salvation, and give all diligence for this purpose. In short, divine power is the *efficient* cause ; our own diligence is the *instrumental* cause, of our christian preservation and final perseverance. And what God hath joined together, let not man presume to put asunder.

#### CHAP. III, 19, 20.

“By which, also, he went and preached unto the spirits in prison ; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.”

From this scripture, some have inferred that our Saviour, after his crucifixion, actually went to the regions of the damned, and there preached the gospel, and offered salvation ; and this sentiment has been supposed to derive yet further countenance from the noted passage in Ps. xvi, 10, which by St. Peter (Acts ii, 31) is expressly applied to Jesus Christ. But for the true meaning of Acts ii, 31, see the critical remarks on that text in page 64 ; where it was shown that the word there translated hell, has no necessary connection with future punishment, but signifies, *in itself considered*, either the grave, or the state of the dead, i. e. the invisible separate state generally, whether that state be a state of happiness or of misery. To hell, the place of torment, our Saviour never went. Nor does the text now under consideration afford the least evidence that he ever did. It is not said, he went *to* the prison of those spirits ; but that he went and preached unto the spirits *in* prison ; went, says Matthew Henry, “not by a local motion, but by special operation.” It is worthy of remark, also, that the word

here rendered *preached*, is not that which signifies appropriately, and by way of eminence, to preach the *gospel*, or to declare the glad tidings. The original word signifies merely to publish, to proclaim as a herald or public crier : And though it is in the scriptures frequently applied to the gospel, to denote the publication of that also ; yet it is by no means restricted to that sense, but is equally applicable to evil as to good, to happiness as to misery. (See the notes on Mark iii, 15.) Therefore, even on the absurd supposition that Christ was employed during the interval of time between his death and resurrection, in an embassy to those incarcerated spirits, it would not certainly follow that he published the *gospel* to them ; that he declared to them the good news, the glad tidings, and offered them salvation. But his publishing, his preaching, might have been, for aught we know, only a renewed annunciation, that ‘ there remained no more a sacrifice for their sins ; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which should devour them as adversaries.’ (Heb. x, 26, 27.)

But it is time to show positively what the true meaning of this scripture is. And for this purpose it must be observed, that the spirits here mentioned, are evidently the spirits, the souls, of Noah’s contemporaries ; for they are said to have been disobedient, *when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah*. But surely this was impossible, unless they then existed. And whereas these spirits are here represented as in prison ; this imports that they were, when St. Peter wrote, in the prison of torment. To those spirits, souls, or persons, while they were on earth, Christ preached by his Spirit, and through or by means of his servant Noah ; i. e. he sent Noah to preach to his contemporaries, the wicked inhabitants of the old world ; to set before them their sins, and call them to repentance ; and to publish, proclaim to them, the impending judgments of Jehovah, and especially the tremendous judgment of a general deluge, which, unless they should seasonably repent, would soon come, overtop the highest mountains, and utterly exterminate all that guilty generation from off the face of the earth. Such appears to be the true and the sole meaning of the above passage.

## II. PETER.

## CHAPTER I, VERSE 20.

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”

What could the apostle have meant by this last clause—“any private interpretation?” Some, the Papists especially, have explained it, as denoting that individuals, as such, have no right to judge and determine about the meaning of scripture for themselves—to put their own private constructions upon it; but, in opposition to this, they should receive as correct and authentic the interpretation put upon it by the *church*. This, of course, supposes that the church does not, will not, cannot, err in its decisions relative to this subject. It supposes that there is in the church *somewhere*, a sort of infallibility, in its interpretations of scripture. But infallibility is not allowed to have existed in any men, or in any body of men, since the age of inspiration. Nor is it allowed that the right of private judgment has ceased, or ever will cease. Henry interprets the words, “any private interpretation,” to mean private, individual opinion, and supposes the meaning of this text to be, that no prophecy, nor part of holy scripture, is to be considered as the mere private individual opinion or wish of the writer; but rather as “the mind of the Spirit,” as a revelation from God. But this interpretation makes the next verse a mere repetition of this, and not a reason for what is here said; and is far from being satisfactory. It ought to be remembered, that it is only the *prophecies* of scripture that are here mentioned, and that of *them only* is it here said, that they are of no private interpretation. The primary and most proper meaning of the Greek word rendered private, is *one's own*; and it may denote either *his* own, or *their* own, according to circumstances. This text, then, may be understood as teaching, either—

1st. That the Old Testament prophets did not undertake to give *their own* particular views and interpretations of those predictions which they delivered, viz. of their import, and how they were to be fulfilled. And there was a reason why they should not. They did not, we must suppose, understand fully their own writings; and even if they had fully



understood them, yet their commission and business as *prophets*, would have required them rather to *predict* than to explain. Or,

2d. This text may be understood as teaching, that no prophecy of the scripture is of *its own* interpretation; i. e. (to adopt the words used in Robinson's Wahl), "No prophetic declaration of the scripture is to be explained *by itself*, or without reference to the event." Certainly, many of the prophecies of scripture, and more especially those which are expressed in figurative language, are of such a nature, that they cannot be explained *of themselves*, and *by themselves*, nor in any other way than by their accomplishment. We must, therefore, wait for the events to take place; and comparing the one with the other, the prophecies with the events—then, and not until then, shall we fully understand those prophecies.

#### CHAP. II, 1.

"But there were false prophets, also, among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them."

The two Greek words, translated "damnable heresies," signify literally and exactly, heresies of destruction, i. e. destructive heresies. Of these, only one is here specified, viz. "denying the Lord that bought them." This implies, not only a practical disobedience to his authority, but also, and most directly, *a denial of his divinity*. And surely, 'he that hath an ear should hear what the Spirit here saith to the churches.' This warning is as important, and as necessary to be regarded, *now*, as it was in the apostolic age; for how many false teachers are there now among the people, who introduce destructive heresies, and particularly the one mentioned in this text; teachers who deny the Lord that bought them; who deny his divinity; who assert that he was a mere man, or at most a mere creature; and who do this and such like things *privily*, not letting their real sentiments be known at first, nor until by artful management, they shall have prepared the way for their probable ultimate reception and triumph. But how dreadful will be the end of such



teachers, and of their deluded followers! They “bring on themselves swift destruction.”

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## I. JOHN.

### CHAPTER I, VERSE 7.

“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.”

On this passage I shall make only one remark, and that not so much critical as practical. It is this; that in order to enjoy fellowship with our christian brethren, it is absolutely necessary that we should walk in the light ourselves; should live near to God, especially in the performance of secret duties. Our hearts must be right toward *Him*, and his truth and cause, in order that they may be right toward and with our brethren.

### CHAP. III, 9.

“Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

It is certain that this passage must be understood with some qualification; otherwise St. John would expressly contradict other inspired writers, as well as the testimony of universal observation and experience. Nay more; he would expressly contradict himself. For this same apostle says, (chap. i, 8), “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” The word *ποιεῖ*, which is here translated *commit*, may be translated, and must here mean, *work*. Thus: ‘Whosoever is born of God doth not work sin;’ i. e. doth not make a *business* of it; doth not practise sin; doth not sin allowedly and *habitually*, as others do, and as he himself once did. The reason is, “his seed remaineth in him;” that seed of divine truth and grace which is incorruptible; that principle of life and vigor which is always in his soul, opposing sinful, and promoting holy exercises of heart. For the same reason, also, and because he is truly born of God, he *cannot* sin, i. e.

*habitually*, as others do who have not been born of God ; that is, it is *morally* impossible he should thus sin.

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## JUDE.

### VERSE 9.

“ Yet Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil, (he disputed about the body of Moses), durst not bring against him a railing accusation ; but said, the Lord rebuke thee.”

The only particular in this verse, of which I shall attempt an explanation—the only one, indeed, which appears necessary to be explained, is that which relates to Michael’s dispute and contention with the devil, about the body of Moses. By the body of Moses, some understand the Jewish church, which, they suppose, may be called the body of Moses, in much the same sense as the christian church is in the New Testament called the body of Christ. But by the body of Moses, in this place, is probably intended his *dead* body—his corpse. We read, in Deut. xxxiv, 5, 6—“ So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley, in the land of Moab, over against Beth-Peor : But no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.” The *Lord*, then, buried Moses, but probably through the instrumentality of Michael, the archangel. The reason for this extraordinary burial of Moses’ body, and for its subsequent concealment, is not revealed. It is supposed, however, to have been as follows, viz : that the archangel perceived if the *Israelites* had buried him, and had of course known the place of his sepulchre, they would afterwards have dug up or disinterred his body, and paid divine honors to it. The devil is supposed to have been sensible of this, as well as Michael. Hence, and because he wished to promote such idolatry, he endeavors to get possession of the body. In the mean time, however, Michael interposes, resists the devil, and frustrates his impious purpose. Such mutual contest between Michael and the devil, is supposed

to have been the thing intended by St. Jude, in this place. The above appears by far the most satisfactory interpretation, especially when we consider the fact, that the devil's policy has always been to promote this species of idolatry. And alas! in this he has been too successful, as appears particularly in the Romish church, where the worship of saints and of images has been, and still is, so general.

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## REVELATION.

### CHAPTER IV, VERSE 6.

“And before the throne was a sea of glass, like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts, full of eyes before and behind.”

The word *beast*, in our language, properly denotes a *brute*, a dumb, irrational animal; of course, a *mere* agent, not a *moral* agent of any kind. In this sense, also, the word is understood by the common people. Hence the difficulty in the way of their understanding what St. John means, in his representation of these four beasts, as round about the throne of God, and as there uniting with the twenty-four elders in their celestial praises. Can *beasts*, say they, be in heaven? And even if they could be there, yet how can they perform that adoring worship which is here ascribed to them? For the information, then, of common readers, it should be observed, that though in A. D. 1613, when the present English version of the Bible was published, the term *beasts*, as it was then understood, might have correctly expressed the import of the original word, ( $\xi\omega\alpha$ ), this is not the case now. The word signifies precisely *living creatures*. And though the word itself is generic, and may mean living creatures of any description; and though it does in fact sometimes denote dumb creatures, brutes, as in Heb. xiii, 11: 2 Pet. ii, 12; yet, in this passage, it must signify *intelligent* and *holy* creatures only; for surely none but such can be round about the throne of Jehovah, worshipping him.

## CHAP. v, 1.

“And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.”

To speak of a book's being written within and on the back side, sounds somewhat strange to an English reader. Indeed, he knows not what to make of the expression, “written on the back side,” unless it be that it was written *on the cover*; for the cover of the book is what he would naturally understand by its back side. Here, again, it becomes necessary to advert to ancient customs. The books of the ancients were very different from ours. They consisted of long scrolls, (commonly made of parchment), sewed or pasted together, and fastened at the end to two rollers, much as our large maps now are. Hence we read of the roll of a book, as in Jer. xxxvi, 2. These scrolls were seldom written except on the inner side; that being the side, which, when the scrolls were rolled up, would of course be turned in. Sometimes, however, and in extraordinary cases, the other side or outside of these scrolls was written on likewise; and when this was the case, it was a sign that the scroll contained more matter than usual, and was on that account particularly entitled to the deep and solemn attention of mankind. Such, let it be remembered, were the βιβλία, or books of the ancients; and such, says Doddridge, the copies of the Old Testament in the Jewish synagogues now are. The preceding remarks may, it is hoped, serve to explain satisfactorily the passage now under consideration, so far as the nature of the *book* here mentioned is concerned.

## CHAP. xi, 1—13.

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and the angel stood, saying, rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three-score days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive-trees, and the two

candlesticks standing before the God of the earth : And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies : And if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy ; and have power over waters, to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them ; and their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves : And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another ; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half, the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet ; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, come up hither : And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud ; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell ; and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand ; and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

As the above paragraph is more evidently determinate, in respect of meaning and application, than many or most other parts of the Apocalypse ; and as it discloses many most important events in the moral world, a great part of which have already taken place, and are recorded in ecclesiastical history ; and as most of those readers for whom chiefly this work is designed, do find difficulty in understanding what the inspired revelator here says, and need assistance for that purpose ; for these reasons, the whole paragraph is considered as proper for insertion in the present work.



A reed having been given to the apostle, he was directed to measure therewith the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worshipped therein. By the temple of God and the altar are intended the places where spiritual worship was performed; and by them that worshipped therein, those are meant who really performed such worship. The court without the temple (verse 2) signifies mere nominal Christians—formal professors. This court being given to the Gentiles, denotes that such professors would be under the influence of the maxims, policy, and power of the surrounding ungodly world; which has always been the case with mere nominal Christians. The treading of the holy city under foot forty and two months, exhibits the character and the duration of the papal tyranny, and implies, that during all this period, true religion would be in a languishing and depressed state. It is allowed by all judicious commentators, that the forty and two months here mentioned, are to be understood not in the literal, but in the *prophetical* sense, according to the usual chronological reckoning in other parts of this book. Of course, by these forty and two months must be intended a duration, the same with that of the one thousand two hundred and three score days mentioned in the next succeeding verse; for 42, multiplied by 30, the average number of days in a month, yield a product of 1260. It is said, (verse 3), “And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three score days, clothed in sackcloth.” These two witnesses cannot denote two individuals merely, because these same two witnesses are represented as prophesying through the entire duration of the apostacy; that is, during the whole of the 1260 prophetical days, by which are intended so many literal years, according to the computation in Num. xiv, 34, “forty days, each day for a year.” (See also Ezek. iv, 4, 5, 6.) But it is very absurd to suppose, that two individuals should prophesy for such a great length of time; because never, not even in the antediluvian age, have men lived so long. The most probable opinion is, that a *definite* number is here used for an *indefinite* and a *sufficient* one; two or three having been the number specified under the law, (Deut. xix, 15), and under the gospel too, (2 Cor. xiii, 1), as necessary, and as

sufficient for the confirmation of any testimony, or for the establishment of any matter of fact. By these two witnesses *prophesying*, is intended, not their predicting future events, but their expounding the holy scriptures; their instructing, and warning, and exhorting the people in divine things; (this being the sense in which the word is commonly used in the New Testament); and particularly their bearing testimony against the errors, corruptions, and wickedness of that period. The general meaning of this verse appears to be, that during the entire continuance of that nominally christian, but yet really anti-christian power, a competent and *sufficient* number of witnesses would be raised up to protest against its enormities; which, in the sequel, we shall see has hitherto been the case. These two witnesses are said (verse 4) to be, "the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth." These appellations, as applied to them, signify that God's faithful witnesses are *precious* in his sight, and are appointed and established to preserve the pure light of truth, and to diffuse its irradiating beams among a benighted world. If any one should hurt these witnesses, (verse 5), the signal vengeance of Heaven would surely overtake him for so doing. These witnesses are said (verse 6) to "have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy;" and also to "have power over waters, to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will;" by which strong figurative language it is represented, that great would their interest in heaven be, and great their influence (should they choose to exert it), either in preventing the descent of blessings, or in procuring the infliction of judgments on their enemies and persecutors. It is said, (verse 7), "And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them." The word τελέσωσι may be understood as meaning, "when they shall be about to finish;" and as it *may* be thus translated, so in this place it *should* be. For as the exasperation and violence of the beast against the witnesses were evidently owing to their *testimony*, they would more naturally be excited during the continuance, than *after the close*, or total cessation

of that testimony. We read, (verse 8), "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of that great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." By the "great city," must be intended generally the Roman empire, which is here, by implication, assimilated to Sodom and Egypt. Sodom was distinguished for its lewdness, and Egypt for its cruelty towards the people of God; and papal Rome has been similarly notorious for its *spiritual lewdness*, or idolatry, and for its intolerance and cruelty towards Protestants. In that great city, that is, in Judea, which was then a constituent part of the Roman empire—a street, as it were, of the great city, our Lord was personally crucified, and has since been often "crucified afresh" in his people. The surrounding ungodly world, the adherents of the beast, seeing the witnesses already dead, would be so far from being moved with sympathy towards them, that they would not even allow them the customary and the very reasonable privilege of a burial: Nay, they would even "rejoice over them, and make merry, and send gifts one to another," to testify their mutual congratulations. To the eye of sense the appearance now was, that "truth had fallen in the streets," and that there would be none to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." But man's extremity, and especially the church's extremity, is God's opportunity. We see, in this case, that "the triumphing of the wicked is short;" for behold, "after three (prophetical) days and a half, the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them that saw them." (Verse 11.) At this most critical time, these witnesses revive, and prophesy again. But this was not all. For soon "they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them." (Verse 12.) They were elevated to an honorable and glorious station, and became the objects of special divine approbation and protection; and that too in the view, and to the amazement and mortification of their enemies. "And the same hour, (verse 13), was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand, (Greek,

seven thousand names of men) ; and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." This shows, that after the resurrection and ascension of the witnesses, there would be a great shaking and revolution in the dominions of the beast, or among the apostate papal church ; that a considerable part of it would immediately fall, i. e. secede from papal jurisdiction and connection, and receive the truth as it is in Jesus ; and the remainder would be so "affrighted" by this unexpected occurrence, that they would in a sense give glory to the God of heaven ; so far, at least, it may be supposed, as to cease from open hostility and persecution, and to acknowledge the providence of God, as exhibited in rewarding his faithful servants, and in punishing his and their enemies.—In support of this interpretation, so far as relates to the beast and the witnesses, and their mutual conflict with each other, I shall now mention a few facts, as stated in authentic ecclesiastical history. In about three hundred and twenty years after Christ, pagan persecution ceased. Under the reign of Constantine, the first christian emperor, christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire. But alas ! the gold soon became dim, and the most fine gold was soon changed. That worldly ease and affluence, which arose from governmental protection and favor, did more injury to the cause of vital godliness, than ten successive persecutions had done. The bishops became ambitious of worldly power and distinction. The visible church, though greatly increased in numbers, by means of outward favorable circumstances, soon showed signs of decay in point of spirituality. In A. D. 606, the bishop of Rome was, by an imperial edict, constituted universal bishop ; and the saints then began to be delivered into his hand. Hitherto, however, the Roman pontiff had exercised no jurisdiction, except in spiritual things. But in A. D. 756, the exarchate of Ravenna was assigned to him, and he became thereby a temporal prince. In A. D. 787, a papal council decreed the worship of images. Meanwhile, however, the witnesses appeared ; and in A. D. 794, image-worship was condemned by a council of three hundred bishops. In the eleventh century, the witnesses became more numerous, more bold, and more successful. The most



distinguished of them, in that age, were the Waldenses, and the Albigenses. In the vallies of Piedmont they "kept the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," and protested against the errors and sins of the times. In A. D. 1206, the inquisition, that horrid engine of popery, was established; and these faithful witnesses were the first who experienced its cruelties. But no papal cruelties nor stratagems could either cool their ardor or damp their courage. They still persevered in their testimony, boldly declaring, 'that the church of Rome had renounced the faith of Christ, and was the whore of Babylon; that the fire of purgatory, the sacrament of mass, the worship of saints, &c. were the inventions of Satan.' Perceiving that the ignorance, indolence, and dissoluteness of the Roman clergy, had been the great means of the so general prevalence of error and wickedness; and wisely concluding, that for the restoration and preservation of "the faith once delivered unto the saints," a pious, learned, and active ministry was, under God, necessary; they soon turned their attention to this latter object. And among other means used to attain it, was the following. They required of their pastors, before they were ordained, that "they should learn by heart all the chapters of Matthew and John, all the canonical epistles, and a good part of the writings of David, Solomon, and the prophets." (Milner.) In A. D. 1229, the papal authority, with the Roman pontiff at their head, solemnly forbade the use of the scriptures to the common people. In connection with this, they denied the right of private judgment in matters of religion, and required the people to receive as authoritative and final, the decisions of the church, i. e. the Roman church, in respect to all matters of doctrine, discipline, and worship. Against such tyrannical and antichristian measures, the witnesses vigorously protested. The papal maxim, "Ignorance is the mother of devotion," they boldly condemned; and at the same time declared and proved the absolute necessity of a knowledge of the holy scriptures, not only for ministers, but for the common people also. For several hundred years, there had been no translation of the Bible in use, beside the Latin Vulgate; and as the Latin language itself was not well understood



by a great proportion of the people, the necessity of the translation of that blessed volume into other languages, and particularly into the English, was very obvious. Accordingly, in about A. D. 1367, Wickliff translated the New Testament into English. And though for reading it, many suffered death; though Wickliff's books, as well as his body were burned by the Papists, the holy flame could not be quenched, nor could the increasing progress of truth be arrested. In the fifteenth century, "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Yet even then the Lord had his witnesses. The most distinguished of them were, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, who, for receiving Wickliff's books, and for zealously propagating his sentiments, were burned to death, by order of the council of Constance. Then it was that the cause of the witnesses appeared almost desperate. But in the next century it revived; for then appeared Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and others, through whose testimony a deadly blow was given to the beast. Then the fainting cause of truth revived; and as it was always honorable and glorious in the eyes of the Lord, (being, indeed, *his own* cause), so now it began to be increasingly so in the eyes of men. In vain were the reformers' books burned, and their lives threatened. In spite of all the envy and wrath of the beast, the light of the reformation soon spread from Germany into most of the nations of Europe. Since that period, the witnesses for God have greatly increased, both in numbers and influence; and the cause of truth, in opposition to the commandments and traditions of men, has gradually advanced. Still, however, the war is not over. The vigorous efforts now made by the Romanists, to establish their religion *in our own country*, and especially in the great valley of the Mississippi, invest this subject with an interest, which cannot fail of being deeply felt by every true Christian, and by every genuine patriot among us. Present appearances indicate it as not at all improbable, that our struggle with Romanism and infidelity may be even more severe than it ever yet has been. But let every friend of Christ be at his post, and do his duty. The late resolution of the American Sunday School Union, to establish Sabbath schools throughout the valley

of the Mississippi, (wherever it should be practicable), within the space of two years, is worthy of all praise. And while we say so, how important it is that we should, as far as possible, second their efforts ; for how *can* they accomplish this mighty work, without the co-operation of the christian public ? The most effectual way we can take to guard against Romanism, and against Antichristianism, (in whatever form it may appear), is to diffuse far and wide the pure light of God's word ; that light which Heaven will bless for the salvation of souls ; and, especially, to instill its blessed principles into the minds of the rising generation. Let all the friends of Christ, then, do their duty in this respect, and they need have no fears about the final result. Babylon must fall ; and the kingdoms of this world will finally become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. (Verse 15.)

CHAP. XX, 4, 5.

“ And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them : And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image ; neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands ; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again, until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.”

It has been a very prevalent opinion among Christians, that the church of God is yet to enjoy a period of hitherto unequalled prosperity on earth. This period has been usually styled the millennium, and has been supposed to be predicted or referred to in several places of scripture ; but in none so clearly, and so definitely, 'as in the one now under consideration. Hence the deep interest Christians have so generally had in this part of holy writ. Hence their desire to understand aright its true meaning ; and hence the questions they have so frequently proposed to ministers and others, for this purpose. On the subject of the first resurrection, as connected with that of the millennium, many persons have been equally inquisitive. It cannot be denied that the senti-

ments of many of the ancient fathers relative to the millennium, were very gross and absurd; as may be seen by consulting Turretine, "De Resurrectione Quæstio III," and Buck's Theological Dictionary. But this is no reason why ours should be so. Nor should this circumstance be considered as any reproach to the doctrine of the millennium itself; but only as an exhibition of the weakness and errors of some who have been its advocates. The doctrine of the millennium is now pretty generally received by Christians, and christian ministers, as a part of their creed. So far as there is a difference of opinion among them in regard to this subject, it seems to relate to what may be called the *adjuncts* of the doctrine, rather than to the doctrine itself. In other words, they do not all interpret in the same manner what is said in scripture, and especially by the Revelator in this chapter, respecting some of those *events* which are to take place in that glorious period. Most Christians seem to believe in the doctrine itself, as a *fact*; but they do not all understand it in the same manner; as will sufficiently appear in the following remarks. All that seems necessary for the illustration of this subject, may be comprised in the answers to the following questions, viz:—What is to be understood by the thousand years? In what sense will Christ reign on earth, during these thousand years? In what sense will the saints live and reign with Christ, during the same period? and, What is here meant by the first resurrection?

I. What is to be understood by the thousand years; or how long a period of time is thereby intended? The most prevalent opinion is, that a thousand literal or solar years are meant, each consisting of three hundred and sixty-five days. The objection to this sentiment, and apparently a very weighty one, is, that *no where else* in the Apocalypse is time reckoned in this manner. In this book various chronological terms and phrases are used; such as "half an hour," (ch. viii, 1); "five months," (ch. ix, 5); and "an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year," (verse 15); "forty and two months," (ch. xi, 2), and "three days and an half," (verse 9); "a thousand two hundred and threescore days," (ch. xii, 6.) In all these instances, time is reckoned, not literally, but *mystically*; and hence arises

strong presumptive evidence, that the “thousand years,” here mentioned, are not to be understood in the literal sense. Some suppose, that by the “thousand years,” are intended a thousand *prophetical* years; i. e. three hundred and sixty-five thousand years, as *we* reckon years. This sentiment might be supposed, indeed, to derive some support from the manner in which time is usually reckoned in other parts of this book. It has analogy in its favor; and for this reason I should be inclined to adopt it, were it not for the apparent absurdities which might be mentioned as attending such an interpretation, and in view of which our best commentators are generally agreed in rejecting it.—There is still another opinion on this point, which is, that the phrase “thousand years,” is here used *indefinitely*; or that a definite and a large number is here used to express an indefinite and a still larger one. This sentiment certainly appears plausible from the fact, that numbers are frequently thus used in other parts of scripture, as, among others, in 1 Kings xix, 18: Rev. xiv, 1. It is also worthy of remark and remembrance, that the particular number, “a thousand,” is frequently used in scripture in this indefinite sense, not as denoting that precise number of units which we include in the term, but only as expressing in general, a very large number. (See Deut. xxxii, 30: 1 Chron. xvi, 15: Ps. l, 10, and xci, 7: Isa. xxx, 17.) And, probably, all that is intended by these “thousand years” of Christ’s reign on the earth, is, that a time of long duration is yet to come, when true religion shall flourish on the earth, in a degree and to an extent far beyond what has ever yet been realised. And thus much, at least, all must believe, who believe in the prophecies and promises of scripture relative to this subject. These are so numerous, that the only difficulty in quotation lies in selecting. Most of them are so *explicit*, that they cannot fail of being understood by every reader of common sense, who duly attends to them; and at the same time so *definite*, that they can properly be applied only to the “kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ.” I refer the reader to the following, only, as specimens of many others, viz: Ps. ii, 8; xxii, 27; lxxxvi, 9: Isa. ii, 2, 4; xlv, 23; xlix, 6: Dan. vii, 27: Zech. xiv, 9: Mal. i, 11: Rev. xi, 15.



II. In what sense will Christ reign on earth, during these "thousand years?" The language here used, viz. "they lived and reigned *with* Christ a thousand years," plainly implies that Christ himself will, in some sense or other, reign on the earth during that period. I say *on the earth*, because (notwithstanding the opinion of some to the contrary) it is certain that the scene of Christ's reign here intended, is the earth, and not heaven, the world of glory. This appears from the *limit* which is here assigned to that reign, viz. a thousand years; for in whatever way we understand this expression, whether as denoting a thousand solar years, or a thousand prophetic years, or in the indefinite sense, as signifying in general a very long time; still, it is *time*, after all, or limited duration only, that is thereby intended. Absolute eternity, or endless duration, is never expressed in this manner, but by such terms as these—everlasting, eternal, for ever and ever, &c. Again, in verse 5th, these "thousand years" are said to be "finished," and in verse 7th, to be "expired," which surely cannot be said of an absolute eternity. But from numerous other passages of scripture we learn, that the reign of Christ in the world of glory, (not indeed as Mediator, but as *God*, and as one with the Father), and the reign of his redeemed people with him there, will be strictly eternal, and not merely for a thousand years. (Isa. ix, 7: Rev. xi, 15: Luke xviii, 30: 1 Thess. iv, 17: Rev. iii, 12, and xxii, 5, &c.) From these considerations it is evident, that the reign of Christ here referred to, is to be a reign *on this earth*. The question now recurs: In what sense will Christ reign on the earth, during these "thousand years?" As to the general nature of his reign at that time, it will doubtless be *spiritual* only. For such it always has been, and always will be. (John xviii, 36: Rom. xiv, 17.) But the point more directly embraced in this question is—Will Christ appear on earth *personally*, in the millennium, and will he then reign in *this sense*? Some suppose he will; and some respectable writers, too, besides Faber, are of this opinion. But there is no sufficient evidence of this. Those very few texts which are usually brought as evidence, and even that noted one in Zech. xiv, 4, will readily admit another interpretation. On the other



hand, there are weighty reasons against such an opinion. For 1st, So far as we can see, Christ's personal appearance on earth at that time would not be at all necessary. It will not be necessary for the *comfort of his followers*. It was not so formerly. When our Saviour told his disciples that he was to go his way from them, to Him that sent him, sorrow filled their hearts. But what did he then say to them? "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth : *It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*" (John xvi, 7.) Since, therefore, the Saviour's personal residence on earth was not necessary for the happiness of his people formerly, we may conclude it will not be so in the millennium. Nor will it be necessary for the *general advancement of his kingdom*. This has always been accomplished, not by his personal manifestation, but by the efficacious operations of his Holy Spirit ; by his power and grace, as exercised in enlightening the minds, subduing the wills, and sanctifying the hearts, of the children of men. And these divine influences may be imparted as well, if he be in heaven, as if he were on earth. 2d. Several texts of scripture forbid the idea that Christ will be on earth, in his own proper person, during the millennium. The following, among others, deserve particular attention :—Acts iii, 21—"Whom the heavens must receive, until the times of the restitution of all things." Until those times, therefore, or until the great day of final judgment, Jesus Christ is to be retained in the upper world : And if so, then, obviously, he cannot be on earth during the "thousand years," which are to precede that day. 1 Thess. iv, 16—"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." It is perfectly plain from the connection, that the period to which this text refers, is that of the general judgment : And we hence learn, that at the commencement of the great day, the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven to earth ; which, on supposition that he were already here, would be not only unnecessary, but impossible. Heb. ix, 28—"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without

sin, unto salvation." Hence we learn, that the appearing of Christ at the last day, will be his *second* appearing. His first appearing was in the days of his flesh : And as his final appearing to judge the world, and to complete the redemption and salvation of his people, is to be his *second* appearing ; so, of course, his personal manifestation on earth, during the millennium, is not to be expected. From these considerations it appears, that Christ will not be on earth personally in the millennium. He will then, indeed, reign on earth, and over the earth ; but it will be as formerly, by his *spiritual* influence only, while this King of saints himself will be on his holy hill of Zion above. But,

III. In what sense will the saints live and reign with Christ, during these thousand years ? What does the Revelator mean, when he says, " They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years ? " Whom or what does he intend by the pronoun *they*, in this case ? Now, it is evident from the preceding part of this same verse, that he intends thereby, in general, the *martyrs*, and *such* martyrs, too, as had suffered a violent death from the *beast*, in consequence of their refusing to worship him, and his image. Further, it is to be particularly remembered, that it is only the *souls*, the spirits of those martyrs, that are here mentioned as living and reigning with Christ, in the glorious days. In short, the import of the language here used is, that the *spirit*, i. e. the self-denial, the holy love, the zeal for God, the faithfulness of the preceding martyrs, of those who had sealed their testimony with their blood, will revive and reign in the people who will live in those happy days ; even as the spirit, the soul of Elijah, revived and reigned in John the Baptist. The way is now prepared to show,

IV. What is meant by the first resurrection in this place. The answer is, it means not a literal, but a *spiritual* resurrection. St. John does not say that he saw the *bodies*, but that he saw the *souls* of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, &c. ; and *they*, those *souls*, lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. And what is meant by their souls living and reigning with Christ, has been already explained. As men are by nature dead in trespasses and sins ; so the commencement and

increase of divine life in their souls, are frequently represented in scripture under the similitude of a resurrection. (Eph. ii, 5, 6, and v, 14 : Col. ii, 12, and iii, 1.) It is, therefore, not a literal, but a spiritual and holy resurrection—a resurrection peculiar to the saints, that is here intended. Accordingly, it is said in the next verse, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : On such the second death hath no power.” This passage, therefore, should not be considered as synonymous with 1 Thess. iv, 16 ; as by many it is. When Paul there says, “The dead in Christ shall rise first,” he means a *literal* resurrection, a resurrection of the body ; as must be evident from the entire context. Accordingly, we find that in those other parts of scripture, where the literal resurrection is mentioned, the mode of expression is such as to convey the idea, that in the literal sense, also, the saints shall rise first. For when the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked is mentioned, that of the righteous is commonly mentioned first. (See Dan. xii, 2 : John v, 29 : Acts xxiv, 15.) Indeed, it appears very suitable and proper, that the dead in Christ should in the literal sense rise first ; chiefly, because they *are* first. “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor.” It is proper, therefore, that in respect to the resurrection, as well as in all other things, the former should have, finally, the visible pre-eminence over the latter. But though the priority of the literal resurrection of the righteous to that of the wicked, sufficiently appears from other parts of scripture, and is of course a truth ; it is not *the* truth here intended by St. John. Additional evidence of this is furnished by the very verse in which this first resurrection is mentioned, viz : “The rest of the dead lived not again, until the thousand years were finished.” But surely the account we have of the literal resurrection in other places, (see John v, 28, 29), forbids the supposition that there will, or can be, such a long interval of time as a thousand years, (in whatever way that period be computed), between the literal, corporeal resurrection of the righteous, and that of the wicked.—What an interesting subject, interesting to Christians, is that of the millennium ! The Lord Jesus shall then be “king over all the earth.” Then “shall the heathen be given to him for

an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." And from accurate computations relative to the 1260 years, in connection with the present remarkable aspects of Providence on the eastern continent, and in our own country; from the extraordinary means now used, and efforts now made, to spread the light of the gospel; also, from the numerous revivals of religion and reformatations in so many parts of christendom, within these few years past, it appears (certainly we may hope) that the glorious day is not far distant, yea, that it has already begun to dawn. And surely it must be the fervent wish and prayer of every true friend of Christ, of every well-wisher to the human race—"May the Lord hasten it in his time. Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."

## APPENDIX,

CONTAINING CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES  
ON SOME DIFFICULT PASSAGES IN  
THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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### GENESIS.

#### CHAPTER II, VERSE 17.

——“In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”

To express a sentiment intensely and forcibly, the Hebrews adopted various kinds of phraseology. Sometimes, for this purpose, they used the adverb *MEÔD*, signifying very much, exceedingly. Sometimes they used the name of God in connection with the object described; as, if they wished to tell us that such and such mountains were very high, they would call them mountains of God. Sometimes by a repetition of the same word. Thus, to express extreme depth, they would say deep, deep. This last, indeed, was their most usual way; and of this there is an instance in the clause before us. In the Hebrew, it is ‘dying, thou shalt die;’ i. e. thou shalt die indeed, shalt surely, certainly die. The expression denotes not only the certainty, but the *terribleness* of that death, which would be the consequence and the penalty of transgression. And how many, and how dreadful evils have resulted from

“Man’s first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat.”

The death threatened to Adam, as the penalty of transgression, includes, according to Witsius, the following things, viz. natural death, consisting in the dissolution of



soul and body ; the miseries of the present life, which are sometimes intended in scripture by the term death, (Ex. x, 17: 2 Cor. xi, 23) ; spiritual death, which Paul expresses by a being “dead in trespasses and sins ;” and—eternal death. It should be remembered, also, that to this terrible death, not only Adam, but his posterity likewise, have become exposed, in consequence of his transgression ; for “by one man’s disobedience many were made (constituted) sinners.” (Rom. v, 19.) Well, then, might the Creator say to Adam, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt *surely die.*” Oh, how necessary is a Redeemer for us miserable sinners, and how precious in this view should Jesus Christ be to us ! How thankful should we be, that though “by one man’s offence death reigned by one ; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

#### CHAP. XLV, 2.

“And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.”

This, says Sir J. Chardin, “is exactly the genius of the people of Asia, especially of the women. Their sentiments of joy or of grief are properly transports ; and their transports are ungoverned, excessive, and truly outrageous. When any one returns from a long journey, or dies, his family burst into cries that may be heard twenty doors off ; and this is revived at different times, and continues many days, according to the vigor of the passion. I was lodged in the year 1676, at Ispahan, near the royal square. The mistress in the next house to mine died at that time. The moment she expired, all the family, to the number of twenty-five or thirty people, set up such a furious cry, that I was quite startled, and was above two hours before I could recover myself. These cries continue a long time ; then cease all at once ; then begin as suddenly at day-break, and in concert.” Such, then, has been the mourning of the Asiatics, in both ancient and modern times. Such, also, has been their behavior on occasions of great *joy*, as well as of great grief, as, particularly, “when any one returns from a long journey.” And this, by the way, is a lively

comment on the text now before us, and accounts satisfactorily for the fact therein stated, viz. "the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh *heard*."

#### CHAP. XLVI, 27.

—"All the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten;" compared with Acts vii, 14—"Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls."

These two texts, compared together, have created difficulty and perplexity in the minds of many readers. It is acknowledged there is a discrepancy between them, so far as mere numbers are concerned. Stephen mentions five more souls or persons, as having come with Jacob into Egypt, than Moses does. What shall we say in respect to this inconsistency? Can any satisfactory solution be given? One way of solving the difficulty is by saying, that Stephen quoted from the Septuagint, the Greek Alexandrine version; as the apostles commonly did, when they brought passages from the Old Testament. In that version it is thus:—"Πᾶσαι ψυχαὶ οἴκου Ἰακώβ αἱ εἰσελθούσαι μετὰ Ἰακώβ εἰς Αἴ-γυπτον, ψυχαὶ ἑβδόμηκονταπέντε;" i. e. "All the souls of the house of Jacob, which entered with Jacob into Egypt, (were) threescore and fifteen souls." Why there should be this difference between the Septuagint and our present copies of the Hebrew Bible, I cannot explain satisfactorily. It is to be presumed, however, that the Hebrew copy, from which the Seventy made their version, contained the passage as they have it. And if it be true, as an able writer has said, viz:—"This version (the Septuagint) also preserves many important *words*, some *sentences*, and several *whole* verses, which originally made a part of the Hebrew text, but have long ago entirely disappeared;" it is possible, that their version may, in this instance, be even more correct than our present Hebrew copies. But the most *satisfactory* solution of the difficulty is that given by Dr. Hales, as quoted by Thomas Hartwell Horne. It is in these words, viz:—"Moses states, that 'all the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, *which issued from his loins*, (except his sons' *wives*), were sixty-six souls;' Gen. xlvii, 26; and this number is thus collected:—

" Jacob's children, eleven sons and one daughter,	12
Reuben's sons, - - - - -	4
Simeon's sons, - - - - -	6
Levi's sons, - - - - -	3
Judah's three sons and two grandsons, - -	5
Issachar's sons, - - - - -	4
Zebulon's sons, - - - - -	3
Gad's sons, - - - - -	7
Asher's four sons, one daughter, and two grandsons,	7
Dan's son, - - - - -	1
Naphtali's sons, - - - - -	4
Benjamin's sons, - - - - -	10

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" If to these sixty-six children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, we add Jacob himself, Joseph, and his two sons born in Egypt, or four more, the amount is seventy, the whole number of Jacob's family which settled in Egypt. In this statement, the *wives* of Jacob's sons, who formed part of the household, are omitted, but they amounted to nine; for of the twelve wives of the twelve sons, Judah's wife was dead, (Gen. xxxviii, 12), and Simeon's also, as we may collect from his youngest son Shaul, by a Canaanitess, (xli, 19); and Joseph's wife was already in Egypt. These nine wives, therefore, added to the sixty-six, gave seventy-five souls, the whole amount of Jacob's household, that went down with him to Egypt; *critically* corresponding with the statement in the New Testament, that " Joseph sent for his father Jacob, and *all his kindred*, amounting to seventy-five souls;"—the expression, *all his kindred*, including the wives, who were Joseph's kindred, not only by affinity, but also by consanguinity; being probably of the families of Esau, Ishmael, or Keturah." Thus does the New Testament furnish an admirable commentary on the Old.

#### CHAP. L, 3.

" And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days."

This passage leads to the mentioning of another circum-

stance, which distinguished the mourning of the ancients, especially of the ancient Egyptians. Rollin, in his ancient history, tells us, that when any person in an Egyptian family died, all the kindred and friends put on habits of mourning for forty or seventy days, according to the quality of the deceased. The dead bodies were immediately embalmed, and put into a kind of chest or coffin, and placed up against the walls in their houses, or in sepulchres, if they had any. These embalmed bodies were called *mummies*.—As the patriarch Jacob was a person of great quality and distinction in Egypt, not only among the Hebrews, but among the natives of that country also, they would of course, in pursuance of their custom, mourn for him *seventy* days.

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## EXODUS.

### CHAPTER VII, VERSES 8—11.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you; then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men, and the sorcerers: Now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.”

Miracles have always been considered by Christians as exclusively the works of Jehovah. They are contrary to, or rather aside from, the usual and established course of divine operations; and hence it is reasonably concluded, that they never have been, and never will be wrought, except for the accomplishment of some very important purpose. No purpose can well be conceived of, as more important, than proving the divine mission of a prophet, and by consequence, the divine origin and authority of his message and communications. And this Christians believe to have been the purpose, the object aimed at by Jehovah, in the miraculous operations of past ages. A strong objection,

however, against the *sufficiency* of miracles for this purpose, has been considered by some as arising from the exploits of the magicians of Egypt. It is natural to remark, that persons who urge this objection must believe, of course, that the magicians wrought *real* miracles; for on no other ground could the objection itself have any real or apparent force. Their reasoning amounts to this:—‘The magicians of Egypt wrought real miracles. This appears from the circumstance, that to the account of Moses’ operations it is immediately added, “and the magicians of Egypt did in like manner, or did so, with their enchantments.” These magicians did just as Moses had done. If, then, Moses performed real miracles, these magicians performed them also. Miracles, therefore, are not peculiar to the prophets of Jehovah. They are not in themselves any proof of the divine mission of him who performs them; or if they are, they prove in this case the divine mission of these magicians, equally with that of Moses.’ Such an objection has frequently been started by infidels and skeptics; and as it is one which directly strikes at the authenticity of the holy scriptures generally, it becomes, for this reason, very important to give it an examination. Did, then, these magicians work real miracles? On this point expositors are not fully agreed. But that they did *not* work real miracles at all on that occasion, appears—Because,

1st. In the instance of the lice brought forth by Moses, they were compelled to acknowledge, “this is the finger of God.” It is expressly said, “And the magicians did so with their enchantments, to bring forth lice, but *they could not*.” (Ch. viii, 18.) What is here said proves, by the way, that the mere expression, “the magicians did so with their enchantments,” is not of itself any evidence that they wrought real miracles; that they in fact performed the same actions which Moses had performed. This expression is here used in reference to a real miracle, which Aaron, by Moses’ direction, had immediately before wrought in their presence; but which, it is here said, these magicians “*could not*” perform, and which they acknowledged themselves unable to perform. It is plain as any thing can be, that though these “magicians did so (in some sense) with their enchant-



ments," as Aaron had done, they did not in this case do the *thing*, the *deed*, the *miracle*, which Aaron had done; nor was it the design of this expression, viz. "the magicians did so with their enchantments," to assert that they did. And if this expression does not of itself prove that a real miracle was performed by them in *this case*, it is but fair to conclude, that it does not prove it in any of those other cases wherein it is used.—But I return from this short digression, to the main argument now in view. We have seen that in respect to the miracle of the lice, the magicians, with all their efforts, could not succeed. But if they had performed *real* miracles before, why could they not now; especially since there was no more difficulty in this case, than in the three others before mentioned?

2d. It should be remembered, that of the ten miracles performed by Moses, three only are mentioned as having been imitated, or (if you choose to say so) performed by the magicians, viz. that of the *rod*, that of the *waters*, and that of the *frogs*. In respect to the two last, the magicians must evidently have wrought on a much *smaller scale* than Moses; for when Aaron stretched out his rod over the waters of Egypt, "all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood." (Ex. vii, 20.) Nay, from Jehovah's words to Moses, (verse 19), it seems that the waters in the streams, in the rivers, in the ponds, in the pools, and even in the vessels of wood, and vessels of stone, and that, too, "throughout all the land of Egypt," must have experienced the same transmutation, before the magicians attempted to imitate Moses in this miracle. What water, then, could they have had, on which to perform their operations? Surely, the quantity of water, that remained for them to work upon, must have been very small; and it has been asserted by naturalists, that a small quantity of water may, by the efforts of art merely, be made to appear *red* like blood. In the case of the *frogs*, the magicians could do but little, because Aaron had already caused them to come forth from the streams, from the rivers, and from the ponds; and they had already covered the land of Egypt. In both these cases, therefore, the magicians must have wrought on a very small scale; and no more remained to be done by them,

than what might, probably, have been done by the help of magic alone.

3d. In chapter vii, 17, it is said that the Lord told Pharaoh, "In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord." This is spoken in reference to the miracle of turning the waters into blood; and the meaning of it, on the lowest construction, must be, that this miracle, as wrought by Moses and Aaron, would be in itself a *sufficient* proof of a direct, divine interposition; and would be suited to reflect light upon the mind of Pharaoh, respecting the true character, and particularly the absolute supremacy, of Jehovah. And we may well suppose that such was the fact, such the divine design, in respect to *all* the miracles wrought by Moses; especially since this is declared in chapter ix, 14, where Jehovah told Pharaoh, that his object in sending "all his plagues" was, that he (Pharaoh) might "know that there was none like Him in all the earth." But it is easily seen, that the miracles of Moses would be no proof of this, if the same miracles were really performed by the magicians, and through the help of magic alone; for they would in that case lose all their *peculiarity* of character, as the *works of God*, and with that, all their force of evidence. In view, therefore, of the *object* Jehovah aimed at, in those miracles which Moses performed, and which they were so well fitted to accomplish, viz. *to shed light upon the mind of Pharaoh respecting his true character*, we have another evidence that the magicians did not work real miracles.

4th. Pharaoh himself did not believe that the magicians wrought real miracles. In every instance, when he wished divine judgments averted, he applied to Moses, and not to his magicians. Now, it is the dictate of reason, that the same power or agency which can inflict judgments, can also remove them; and Pharaoh, as a rational being, must have known this. If, therefore, Pharaoh believed that the magicians had wrought real miracles in the one case, viz. in *inflicting* those terrible judgments on him, and on his people, how strange it is, that he did not sometimes apply to them to work miracles in the other case also, viz. by *removing* those judgments. And the wonder on this subject increases, when we consider his peculiar pride, his contempt of the

GOD of Israel, and his attachment to his own idolatry ; principles which must have effectually prevented his application to Moses, or to Moses' God, for any thing, except in the very greatest extremity, and when all other resources failed. That Pharaoh never did apply to his magicians, to remove the plagues, the judgments, brought on him, and on his people, we must conclude, from the total silence of scripture on this point. And that they never had in fact any agency in removing them, either alone or as co-operators with Moses, is evident in the same manner ; for in no instance is it said, in reference to the removal of the plagues, that "the magicians did so with their enchantments." It seems, then, that Pharaoh did not believe that his magicians possessed any miraculous power. And who could have had a better opportunity, or more advantageous means, for forming a correct opinion about these men, about what they had done, and about what they could do, than he had?—But if their operations were not real miracles, what were they? Answer: They were mere *artful imitations* of the miracles of Moses ; produced, probably, by the help of some diabolical agency. The original word, translated enchantments, is derived from a Hebrew verb, which signifies to hide, to conceal, to in-wrap, to involve ; (see Parkhurst and Buxtorf) ; and is, therefore, well fitted to represent those secret and mysterious arts, those juggling and conjuring tricks, which were sometimes performed of old, and by which false appearances might be substituted for the true ; and thus the senses be deceived. Besides in the history relative to the magicians of Egypt, the word enchantments is found in the following passages, viz : Lev. xix, 26 : Num. xxiii, 23, and xxiv, 1 : 2 Kings xvii, 17, and xxi, 6 : 2 Chron. xxxiii, 6 : Eccl. x, 11 : Isa. xlvii, 9, 12. True, the corresponding Hebrew word in these last passages is not the same in them all, nor is it the same with that used in the phrase relative to the magicians ; but from the fact, that our translators have used the same English word in them all, it is evident that *they* considered those different Hebrew words as synonymous. Now, by attending carefully to the passages above cited, and to the connection in which they severally stand, it will be seen, that in all of them the word enchantments means

substantially as above defined. In all of them, except one, it is clearly used in a *bad*, a wicked sense; and in some of them, as denoting an intercourse with evil spirits. Accordingly, the comment of the ancient Hebrews on the clause, "The magicians did so with their enchantments," was, "*Id opus est dæmonum*;" i. e. that is the work of demons. (See Buxtorf's Lexicon.) It has been already shown, that the mere declaration, "the magicians did so with their enchantments," is no proof that they actually performed the *work*, the *miracle*, which Moses had performed; because these words are used in reference to a case, in which they "*could not*" succeed in their efforts. We may well suppose, therefore, that the similarity implied in this declaration, between the miracles of Moses and Aaron, and the operations of the magicians, relates not to the *substance* of the miracles themselves, but to some circumstances attending them, in which there was doubtless a resemblance. Though there may be some difficulty attending the scheme of interpretation adopted above, it seems, on the whole, that there is no other reasonable, no other consistent way of understanding the operations of the magicians of Egypt, than by considering them as *mere artful imitations* of the miracles of Moses. An additional circumstance in support of this interpretation is, that in every one of the three instances mentioned above, the magicians *followed* Moses in their operations, and never *preceded* him. An imitator must of course *follow* his original. It is well known, moreover, that it is usually much *easier* to *follow*, than to lead the way, in any thing great or rare.

#### CHAP. XI, 1, 2.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold."

It has been said by infidels, that this command could not have been given by Jehovah, as is here asserted, because the conduct which it enjoins would have been so manifestly *deceptive*. "The Israelites, (says the objector), are here said to have received a command from Jehovah, to *borrow* of their Egyptian neighbors certain valuable ornaments,



when they were on the very point of departure from Egypt, and when, as appears from the very face of the account, they had no design ever to return the loan. Now, all this is absolutely incredible. It is incredible, that Jehovah (if he be, as the scriptures say, "a just God and without iniquity,") should have required of his people the conduct here specified, which, in the then existing circumstances, would have been nothing else than extortion and deception." And it is probable that many sincere and humble inquirers after truth, have experienced difficulty in their attempts to understand this passage, in any way perfectly satisfactory to themselves, on account of its apparent reflection on the divine character. For the two-fold purpose, therefore, of answering the objector, and of satisfying the humble inquirer, the following remarks may be useful. The Hebrew word *VISHALU*, (from *SHAAL*), here translated *borrow*, exactly means, and is commonly translated, *ask, demand*. Accordingly, in the Septuagint, and in the Latin Vulgate versions of this text, words synonymous with our word *ask* are used. In the former it is *αἰτέω*, and in the latter *postulo*. The meaning, therefore, of this command of Jehovah was, that the Israelites should *ask*, or *demand*, of their Egyptian neighbors, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. That it was reasonable and right for Him to give them such a command, is evident from the fact, that the silver and the gold are *his*, and he has a right to dispose of them as he pleases. Equally reasonable and right was it for the Israelites to *ask* or *demand* these things of the Egyptians, especially since they had received a divine command for this purpose, and had already done them so many important services, for which they had, as yet, received no remuneration.

#### CHAP. XII, 40.

"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years."

So says Moses. But Stephen declares, in Acts vii, 6, "And God spake on this wise; that his (Abraham's) seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and intreat them evil four hundred years." Stephen evidently refers to the prediction made by



Jehovah to Abraham, in Gen. xv, 13 ; and indeed his words are almost an exact quotation from that passage, as may be seen from comparing the Greek original of the one with the Septuagint version of the other. The passage in Gen. xv, 13, quoted by Stephen, is, then, a prediction of which Ex. xii, 40, may be considered as recording the fulfilment. But the fact or event, as stated in the last mentioned place, does not accord to the prediction. The prediction says four hundred years ; the historical record says four hundred and thirty years. How can these passages be reconciled ? The first remark which naturally occurs is, that neither of these texts is true, in reference only to the *actual residence* and servitude of the Hebrews in Egypt. The fact well authenticated is, that they did not live there so long as either of these periods. In his antiquities of the Jews, (book iv, ch. 15), Josephus says, "They left Egypt four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan ; but two hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt." Nor are these periods themselves to be reckoned from the time Jacob and his family went down to Egypt ; but from that of the calling and departure of Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. Between the event last mentioned, and the time of the Hebrews' final departure out of Egypt, were four hundred and thirty years ; and during the entire interim, they were *sojourners* in a strange land. Additional evidence in favor of this interpretation is furnished by the Septuagint, which reads thus :—"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, which they sojourned in the *land of Canaan*, and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." But still the question is, how can the fact here asserted agree with Stephen's declaration, in Acts vii, 6, and with Gen. xv, 13, whence it is borrowed ; in both which only four hundred years are mentioned ? The true solution of the difficulty is this :—The scriptures sometimes speak in whole, or, as we often say, in round numbers, when those round numbers express the thing *about* as it is, and exactly enough, as it respects the main purpose for which the scriptures were given ; which was, not to perplex or amuse us with chronological niceties, but that they might become "profitable (to us) for doctrine, for reproof, for

correction, for instruction in righteousness;" so that we might thereby be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Thus, in Num. xiv, 33, the Israelites were told, that in consequence of their murmurings, they should wander forty years in the wilderness; whereas, from chapter xxxiii, 3, compared with Joshua iv, 19, it is evident, that several days at least, if not weeks, were wanting, to complete the forty years. Abimelech is said (Judges ix, 5, 56), to have slain threescore and ten persons, his brethren; which number, as appears from verse 2d, included *all* the sons his father Jerubbaal had; but Jotham, one of those sons, was not slain, he having "hid himself." (Verse 5.) Nor was Abimelech himself included in the number of the slain; so that two were wanting to complete the number seventy. (See more on this subject, in my notes on Mat. xii, 40.) Such was the idiom, the *usus loquendi* of the Hebrew language. Nor was such a mode of speaking peculiar to the Hebrew; for how often does it obtain in our own language, as used, too, by native Englishmen, and Americans. It is commonly assumed, in the conversation and writings of our countrymen, that Jesus Christ was born in the year of the world 4000; whereas it is commonly allowed by the best chronologists, and may perhaps be fully proved, that he was not born until four years afterwards. In numerous other cases, we content ourselves with using round numbers. Especially is this the case, when the subject on which we speak or write is of such a nature, that a strict regard to chronological exactness is not necessary. Happy, then, is he that condemneth not the scriptures, in that thing which he alloweth both in himself and in others.

#### CHAP. XV, 4.

——"His chosen captains, also, are drowned in the Red sea."

Let none suppose that the waters of that sea, which the Israelites crossed on their passage from Egypt to Canaan, were really *red*, any more than those of other seas. The Hebrew name for it is *yōm sūph*, i. e. the sea of weeds, or the weedy sea. Why, then, was it called the *Red* sea? Some suppose it was so called from Edom, whose descend-

ants possessed the land adjacent to it on the north; for Edom, in Hebrew, signifies red. Others suppose it was so denominated from Eruthras, one of the kings of Edom, the word Eruthras being a Greek name, of the same import with Edom in the Hebrew. But, whatever might have been the origin or the reason of its name, it is certain, (if we may credit the testimony of travellers, who have been to see it), that its waters are not now really *red*, any more than those of other seas; and, probably, they never were.

#### CHAP. XVII, 1.

“And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim.”

The following remarks of Shaw, a modern traveller, who visited that part of the country here referred to, will probably be read with interest:—“After we had descended, with no small difficulty, the western side of Mount-Sinai, we come into the other plain that is formed by it, which is *Rephidim*. Here we *still* see that extraordinary antiquity, the rock of *Meribah*, which hath continued down to this day, without the least injury from time or accident. It is a block of granite marble, about six yards square, laying tottering, as it were, and loose, in the middle of the valley, and seems to have formerly belonged to Mount-Sinai, which hangs in a variety of precipices all over this plain. The *waters which gushed out*, and *the stream which flowed*, (Ps. lxxviii, 20), have hollowed, across one corner of this rock, a channel, about two inches deep, and twenty wide, appearing to be incrustated all over, like the inside of a tea-kettle that hath been long in use. Besides several mossy productions, that are still preserved by the dew, we see all over this channel a great number of holes, some of them four or five inches deep, and one or two in diameter, the lively and demonstrative tokens of their having been formerly so many fountains. It likewise may be further observed, that art or chance could by no means be concerned in the contrivance, for every circumstance points out to us a miracle; and in the same manner with the rent in the rock of Mount-Calvary at Jeru-

salem, never fails to produce a religious surprise in all who see it."

CHAP. XXIII, 19.

"Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk."

Why was this prohibition given? Had such a barbarous practice ever existed among the Hebrews? It does not appear that it ever had. But such was, it seems, in those days, the practice of the surrounding heathen nations. After they had gathered in their fruits, they took a kid, and boiled it in the milk of its dam, and then, in a magical way, besprinkled their trees, fields, gardens, and orchards; from the superstitious notion, that those trees, fields, &c. would thereby be made more *fruitful*. Now, Jehovah's direction to the Jews was, "Learn not the way of the heathen;" be not conformed to them. And it must have been chiefly for the purpose of preventing such conformity, and of continuing them a "peculiar people," that this prohibition was given.

CHAP. XXV, 18, 19.

"And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold; of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy-seat: And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: Even of the mercy-seat shall ye make the cherubims, on the two ends thereof."

In these verses we are told, that Moses was commanded by God to make two cherubims (more correctly two cherubim) of beaten gold, and to place them in the two ends of the mercy-seat, or of the propitiatory. The word used here in the Septuagint, for "mercy-seat," and used by the apostle also in the same application, (Heb. ix, 5), is *ἱλαστήριον*, which signifies properly the propitiatory. It is the same word with that used in the original of Romans iii, 25—"Whom (i. e. Christ) God hath set forth to be a propitiation," or a propitiatory sacrifice. How often has the question been put—What were these cherubim? What are we to understand by them? What did they represent? Questions like these have exercised the minds, and employed the pens, of many writers; and after all, there is much difference of opinion on this subject, i. e. so far as relates to the *symbolical meaning* of these figures. In a general view, or as it



regards the subject generally, the following notes, appended to Bishop Lowth's ninth lecture, "On the sacred poetry of the Hebrews," will doubtless be read with interest:—"We first find the cherubim guarding the way of the tree of life. (Gen. iii, 24.) Images of them are then placed in the sacred tabernacle, on the ark of the covenant, with their faces turned towards it, and their wings overshadowing the mercy-seat, or the throne of Jehovah, (Ex. xxv, 17—20; xxxvi, 8, 35); and in the temple of Solomon there are images of the same sort, though more magnificently executed. (1 Kings vi, 23—29: 2 Chron. iii, 7, 10—13: Compare Ezek. xli, 18, 19.) Hence, "*He who dwelleth between the cherubim,*" came to be an honorary appellation of Jehovah. (1 Sam. iv, 4: 2 Sam. vi, 2: Ps. viii, 2: Isa. xxxvii, 16.) In the Psalms and Prophets, they are introduced as the supporters of Jehovah's throne, or the bearers of his chariot, when he rides in the clouds. (Ps. xviii, 11: Ezek. i, 10; x, 14: Rev. iv, 6.) Ezekiel describes four cherubim, each of them having four faces, namely, of a man, a bullock, a lion, and an eagle, (Ezek. i, 10); and St. John, who, according to his usual method, adopts the imagery of Ezekiel, and modifies it by his own prolific fancy, gives to one of his cherubim the face of a lion; to another the face of a bullock; to the third the face of a man; and to the fourth that of an eagle. (Rev. iv, 6.) That these cherubim are intended for allegorical figures, and not for real existences, seems manifest from the different descriptions which are given of them, in different parts of the sacred writings.—In condescension to our condition, as creatures of sense, God presented to the minds of the sacred writers, in prophetic vision, such images as are best adapted to give us some apprehension of the indescribable glories of the invisible world, and of the inexpressible, and, to human minds, the inconceivable, majesty of the Godhead." Thus far the Notes.—But the question now more immediately before us, respects those cherubim which belonged to the mercy-seat, or the propitiatory, and were placed in the holy of holies of the tabernacle, (Ex. xxvi, 33, 34); and those also which were afterwards made by Solomon, and placed by him in the holy of holies of the temple. (1 Kings vi, 23, 27.) What did they represent? Of



what were they the emblems, and the symbols? On this point there has been quite a diversity of opinion, as may be seen by consulting "Brown's Antiquities of the Jews," part 1st, section 2d. He mentions three opinions as the ones "most generally received," viz: "either that they were hieroglyphics of the Trinity, as they appear in the works of creation, providence, and redemption; or that they represent the character and office of the ministers of religion; or are descriptive of the general history of the church;" i. e. (as he afterwards explains himself), of the *church* itself, in the several periods of its history, "from the coming of Christ, till the end of the world." That these cherubic figures were emblems of *something*, of some other beings or things, is conceded by all. It seems, moreover, certain, that they were intended to be emblematical of something *celestial*, and not of something *terrestrial*; of some beings in *heaven*, and not of some beings on the *earth*; because an inspired apostle has decided, that the holy of holies itself was a type, a figure of heaven, even of the heaven where the peculiar "presence of God" is. (Heb. ix, 24.) If, then, the holy of holies itself was a type, a figure of heaven, the same must be true in respect to the *furniture* of that most holy place; of which the ark of the covenant, including the propitiatory on the top of it, and the cherubim on each end of it, was an essential and the principal part. So far, then, the point is clear, viz. that these cherubim were emblematical of some being, or beings, in *heaven*. So far we have scriptural evidence; but no further, as I can discover. The Hutchinsonian philosophy, of which the learned Parkhurst was a strenuous advocate, maintains, that the cherubim in the holy of holies were hieroglyphics or emblems of the Trinity, as they appear in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. Parkhurst, in his Hebrew Lexicon, under the word KEREB, (cherub), says—"Those in the holy of holies were emblematical of the ever-blessed Trinity, in covenant to redeem man, by uniting the human nature to the Second Person; which union was signified by the union of the faces of the *lion*, and of the *man*, in the cherubic exhibition. Ezek. i, 10: Comp. Ezek. xli, 18, 19."—Now, one very just and very important canon or rule, relative to

the interpretation of scripture is this, viz: 'That no one thing can be certainly concluded to be a type of another thing, unless the holy scriptures themselves declare it to be so.' To all reflecting persons, the great practical importance of this rule must be obvious at once. It is one of the most effectual safeguards against that rage for allegorising, and mystical interpretation, which has done so much injury to the cause of truth, and to sound biblical science, since the days of Origen. Men of prolific imagination, but of little judgment, have found types in almost every thing in the Bible; and their skill in this has been considered, by many, as an evidence of extraordinary discernment, and even of extraordinary spirituality, on their part. However amusing and gratifying such a mystical interpretation of the scriptures may be to some, "those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern" things aright, will always regard it with suspicion. And it is quite remarkable, that in the same proportion as sound biblical literature has advanced, this method of interpreting scripture has usually become disreputable among Christians, and gone into disuse. We have no warrant for saying, that any one thing is a type or emblem of another thing, further than it was *designed* by the Holy Ghost to be so: And we have not, and cannot have any authentic information, that any one thing was designed by Him to be so, except as the Bible tells us this was the case. Now, to apply these remarks to the case before us. If the Bible tells us, either expressly, or by evident implication, that the cherubim in the tabernacle and in the temple were, in fact, emblematical of the adorable Trinity in the Godhead, we have a right both to believe and to affirm this. It is safe for us to speak as the Bible speaks. We have scriptural authority for saying, both that the holy of holies itself was a type and emblem of heaven, and that the cherubim were emblems of some heavenly being or beings. But where in the scriptures do we find a similar warrant for saying, that these cherubim were emblematical of the Trinity? Far-fetched, indeed, and unsatisfactory, is the conclusion that they were, drawn by the Hutchinsonians from the *faces* of these cherubim, as described by Ezekiel, (chap. i, 10, and x, 14); and from the "material trinity of nature," as

they call it, viz : fire, light, and air in motion. It is granted, that the Father is sometimes designated by the term *fire*, (Heb. xii, 29) ; that the Son is repeatedly designated by the term *light*, (Isa. xlix, 6 : Luke ii, 32 : John viii, 12) ; and that the Holy Spirit, or his influence on the minds of men, is sometimes illustrated by the term *wind*, (John iii, 8.) It is granted, also, that the *primary* import of the Greek *πνεῦμα*, spirit, (which is the term frequently applied to the third person in the Godhead), is *wind*, or air in motion. At the same time, it is remarkable, that these terms *fire*, *light*, and *air*, (or at least two of them), are sometimes differently applied, as it respects the Godhead. The Father is sometimes represented under the emblem of *light*. (Ps. xxvii, 1 ; lxxxiv, 11 : 1 Ep. John, i, 5.) The Holy Spirit, or his influence, is sometimes represented by the term *fire*. (Isa. vi, 6, 7 : Mat. iii, 11.) It is granted that fire, light, and air in motion, may be, in some measure, represented by the *faces* of those animals mentioned in Ezekiel's vision, viz : that of an ox or bull, that of a lion, and that of an eagle ; or that there is something in the peculiar nature of those animals, which bears some resemblance to these material agents. The ox or bull, on account of his impetuosity and fury when provoked, may, perhaps, be likened to fire. The lion may be compared to the light, in respect to his shining eyes, his vigilance, and his strength. The eagle, in respect to his rapid flight, may be compared to the air in motion, and in action. And finally, it is granted, that there may be some resemblance between these three great properties or agents in the material world, viz. *fire*, *light*, and *air* in motion, and the ever-blessed Trinity in the Godhead. But, that the former were proper *types*, and were designed by the Holy Ghost to be emblematical of the latter, we are not authorised to affirm, *because the Bible does not say that they were*. Some suppose that the two cherubim of the ark of the covenant were emblematical of the *angels of heaven*. Dr. Scott was of this opinion, as may be seen by consulting his notes on Exodus xxv, 10—21. The clause in the first epistle of Peter, (ch. i, 12), viz. "which things the angels desire to look into," is supposed to favor this interpretation. For the Greek verb there used, and rendered "to look into," signi-

fies "to stoop down, or forward, in order to look at something;" a posture, which is thought to have been fitly represented by that of the cherubim over the mercy-seat. But why do we attempt to be wise above what is written? Why should we affirm positively such things about the invisible and celestial world, as are no where revealed? (See my notes on Colos. ii, 18.) It seems, all we can know about these cherubim is, that they were emblematical of some beings in heaven, of some "living creatures" there, (Ezek. i, 5, compared with Rev. iv, 6, 7); but of *what* living creatures we do not certainly know, and cannot know in this world.

## NUMBERS.

### CHAPTER IV, VERSES 1—3.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi; from thirty years old and upward, even until fifty years; all that enter into the host, to do work in the tabernacle of the congregation."

So we here read. But in chapter viii, 23, 24, it is said, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, This is it that belongeth unto the Levites; from *twenty and five* years old and upward, they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." The apparent contradiction between these passages may be obviated as follows:—At the age of *twenty-five*, the Levites entered on their novitiate, or probationary term, which lasted five years; and then, or at the age of *thirty* years, they were invested fully with their appropriate office. Such, accordingly, is the solution of this matter, adopted by Maimonides, a noted Jewish writer; by Witsius, Scott, and the best commentators generally; and is, undoubtedly, the true one.

### CHAP. XXII, 20—22.

"And God came unto Balaam by night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word that I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his



ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God's anger was kindled, because he went; and the angel of the Lord stood in the way, for an adversary against him."

These verses, taken in connection, present a difficulty. They embrace three particulars. The first is, the permission granted by God to Balaam, on a certain condition, to go with the princes of Moab. The second is, Balaam's actually going, in consequence of that permission. The third is, the Lord's being angry with Balaam, "*because he went.*" But why should, or rather how could the Lord be angry with Balaam, for doing that which he had expressly allowed him to do? Answer—

1st. The divine permission granted to Balaam on this occasion, is not to be understood as implying that God *approved* of the conduct of Balaam here specified. On the contrary, though God permitted Balaam to go, he did *not* approve of his going for the purpose Balak had in view in sending for him, viz. that of cursing Israel. This appears from the fact, that God had already expressly *forbidden* Balaam to go for that purpose. "And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people; for they are blessed." (Verse 12.) God saw fit, on the whole, to permit Balaam to go; but it was with the view that *his own* purpose respecting Israel, and not Balak's, might be thereby accomplished, viz: that Balaam might bless the people, instead of cursing them; might pronounce a prophetic benediction upon them; might be constrained by a divine influence so to do; however reluctant he was, on his own part to do it. Balak meant it unto evil; but God meant it unto good. God has permitted innumerable things, of which, in themselves considered, he never has approved, and never will approve. He "suffered (or permitted) all nations to walk in their own ways," (Acts xiv, 16); but he did not approve of those ways. If the divine permission, in Balaam's case, must be understood as implying the divine *approbation* of his going with the princes of Moab, *for the purpose* which Balak had in view; then, surely, it would be not only difficult, but impossible, to account for the Lord's being angry with him, because he went. But it is not to be so understood.



2d. Balaam appears not to have complied with the *condition*, on which his going with the princes of Balak had been permitted. That condition was, *the men's coming to call him*. But it seems Balaam did not wait for their call; but rose up in the morning, and immediately went off with the princes of Moab. It is probable, that he called on *them* in the morning, instead of waiting for their calling on *him*. But,

3d. The *motive* with which Balaam went, was the thing which principally constituted his guilt, and provoked the anger of Jehovah. He went "for filthy lucre's sake." Notwithstanding all Balaam's apparent conscientiousness, in asking counsel of God, in respect to the affair of going with the princes of Moab, he appears to have been all the time bent on going; and that, not so much for the purpose of injuring Israel, or gratifying Balak, as for the purpose of obtaining the reward. Hence the apostle Peter, speaking of certain profligate characters, says, "Which have forsaken the right way, and gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who *loved the wages of unrighteousness*." And hence the apostle Jude, speaking of similar persons, says, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam, *for reward*."

#### CHAP. XXV, 9.

"And those that died in the plague, were twenty and four thousand."

But in 1 Cor. x, 8, it is said, "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." On these two passages, (between which there is certainly some inconsistency, as it respects numbers), it may be remarked, that they do not both relate exactly to one and the same *event*; and that the former is more extensive in its reference and import than the latter. From the very face of the latter, as compared with Num. xxv, 1, we learn for what cause these twenty-three thousand fell or died, viz. for their sin with the daughters of Moab. But beside these, many others perished for another reason, viz. *idolatry*, and were slain with the sword about the same time. "The people did eat, and bowed down to

their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor." (Verses 2, 3, 5.) The number of those found guilty of idolatry cannot well be supposed less than one thousand; and Moses seems to have referred to the *whole* number of those, who, at or about that time, suffered death from the avenging hand of God. In this view, then, we need not suppose any *real* inconsistency between the declarations of Moses and Paul, relative to this subject.

## DEUTERONOMY.

### CHAPTER VII, VERSE 22.

"The Lord thy God will put out these nations, by little and little: Thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee."

See in connection with this, Ezek. xxxiv, 25—"I will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land." For the illustration of these texts, the following observations of Haynes, the traveller, as cited by Harmer, may be useful. In giving an account of his arrival in Cana of Galilee, and of the state of that country, he says, "The surrounding country swarms with wild beasts, such as tigers, leopards, jackals, &c. whose cries and howlings, I doubt not, as it did me, would strike the boldest traveller, who had not been frequently in a like situation, with the deepest sense of horror." Also, while visiting Mount-Tabor, and creeping into the holes and subterraneous caverns there, he was told by his guide, he must be more cautious how he ventured; for he could "assure him, those holes and caverns were frequently resorted to by tigers, in the day time, to shelter them from the sun; and therefore he might pay dear for gratifying his curiosity."

### CHAP. XX, 16, 17.

"But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth. But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaan-

ites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee."

A direction of the same import occurs in chapter vii, 1, 2, where the Girgashites are mentioned, in addition to the six nations here enumerated. It occurs in several other places also. Infidels have sometimes insisted on such passages, as being, in their view, a weighty objection against the divine inspiration of those books in which they are contained. The ground of the objection is, that they *reflect upon the character of God*, which, in their opinion, is such, that it is morally impossible he should ever have commanded or approved of the conduct here specified. They suppose it would be inconsistent with his *goodness*, for him so to do. They think it would be inconsistent with the *impartiality* of his goodness, for him to require some of his creatures to treat others of the same species with themselves, in the manner here mentioned. Such treatment they consider as *inhuman* and *cruel*, and as what, therefore, could not have been enjoined by the God of love. But it is not for their sake only, that such passages are here noticed. It is well known, that, in view of them, others beside infidels have experienced serious difficulties, and difficulties, too, somewhat of the same nature. These difficulties have not, indeed, led to the same *result* in the latter case, as they have in the former; i. e. to the conclusion that Moses was not divinely inspired, and that such commands never came from God. They believe that these commands are the commands of God; and it is on this very account, in a great measure, that they feel the difficulty. For their sake, a few remarks will be made on this subject, with the hope, that, by the divine blessing, they may serve to remove "the stumbling-block out of the way of God's people." (Isa. lvii, 14.)

1st. From the history given us of the Canaanites, it is evident that they had become extremely wicked. They were so in Abraham's time, though their "iniquity was not then full." (Gen. xv, 16.) We have a particular account of some of their enormities in the eighteenth and twentieth chapters of Leviticus, and in other places; whence it appears, that they gave of their seed unto Molech, and caused their children to be burnt in the fire to their gods; that they were guilty

of the most abominable lewdness, living in the indulgence and open practice of fornication, incest, and the sin of Sodom; and that they even defiled themselves with the beasts of the field. For after these vices had been particularly mentioned, and the commission of them had been expressly forbidden to the Israelites, it is said, "In all these the nations are defiled, which I cast out before you." (Chap. xviii, 24.) Also, in chapter xx, 23, it is said, "For they (i. e. those nations) committed all these things; and therefore I abhorred them." Such were their abominations, that even the very land was defiled by them, and it *spewed* them out, (Lev. xviii, 28), as the stomach disgorges from it what is most sickening and offensive. At the same time, they were the grossest idolaters. (Deut. xxix, 17.) It is evident, therefore, that they had become, in all respects, extremely wicked. Hence,

2d. They deserved destruction. If they were so enormously wicked, as from the scriptural representations they were, then, certainly, they deserved *punishment* to some extent, and of some sort or other. And if the moral turpitude of those sins which have just been mentioned, and of which they were guilty, be estimated, as undoubtedly it ought to be, by the *scriptural* standard; it is not going too far to say, and we have a right to conclude, that they deserved *destruction* for those sins, and not only temporal, but *eternal* destruction also. Nor can such a conclusion be invalidated by the plea, that those Canaanites were *heathens*, who had no other light to guide them but the light of nature; for the light of nature taught them better, and left them inexcusable, as the apostle Paul shows in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans; where, speaking of those heathens who were guilty of the same sins that have just been specified, he declares, that they are "without excuse," and that "they which commit such things are worthy of death."

3d. God, being a sovereign, had a perfect right to determine in respect to the punishment in this case; in what mode, to what extent, and by what *instruments*, it should be inflicted. None can reasonably question this. He might, if he pleased, have destroyed them by his own immediate agency; and in this way vast numbers of them were in fact



destroyed, as we see in the case of the Amorites particularly. "And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them, unto Azekah, and they died: They were more which died with hail-stones, than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword." (Joshua x, 11.) He might have caused the earth to open, and swallow them up, as it did Korah and his company. He might have destroyed them by lightning, pestilence, famine, or the *sword of war*, as he saw good. And if the latter were to be the means used for this purpose, he had a perfect right to determine by what *class of men* the sword should be used. He might have made these seven nations of Canaan the means and instruments of destroying one another; or he might have sent the surrounding nations, or the *Israelites*, against them, for this purpose, just as he saw good.

4th. Absolute as the command given to the Hebrews, to destroy the Canaanites, appears to be, it must, it seems, have been understood with some limitation, both by Moses and by the Hebrews. By *Moses*; for in Deut. xx, 10, 11, 12, he says, or rather God saith by him, "When thou comest nigh unto a city, to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it: And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee: And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it," &c. Does not this imply, that the utter destruction of the Canaanites was to be conditional only; that in case they should submit, and make peace with the Hebrews, on such terms as should be proposed to them, their lives should be spared? And does it not imply that they were to be completely destroyed, only in case of obstinacy and resistance on their part?—By the *Hebrews*, also, this command appears to have been understood with some limitation. One would think so from their practice; for they did not in fact destroy all that people. Several exceptions are mentioned. Rahab was spared, and her kindred. "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she



had ; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day ; because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." (Joshua vi, 25.) The reason why she and her father's household were preserved, is here said to be, "because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent." And that this was a reason sufficient to justify them in the divine mind, for saving these persons alive, is presumable from the circumstance, that Joshua and the Hebrews are no where blamed for the clemency which they exercised in this case. But how can we account for this, on the ground that the command in question was perfectly absolute, admitting no limitation in *any* case ? If it had been *thus* absolute, neither the reason here mentioned, nor *any reason whatever*, could have justified them in saving these persons alive. The Gibeonites, also, were spared. "And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live ; and the princes of the congregation sware unto them." (Josh. ix, 15.) Some peculiar circumstances, it is true, attended this case. Joshua was deceived by that people. From the very plausible account they gave of themselves, he really supposed that they came "from a very far country," and that they were no part of any of the seven nations of Canaan. But he soon discovered his mistake. And why did he not *then* destroy them, if he had understood the divine command as absolute in the sense above mentioned ? The answer doubtless will be, because he had made a solemn league and covenant with them. But would such a covenant as that was, a covenant made *under circumstances of deception*, have been considered by Joshua, as imposing stronger obligations than an express command of Jehovah ? Can we suppose, in short, that Joshua would have spared the Gibeonites, if he had understood the command in question in so absolute a sense, that it would admit of no limitation in any case whatever ? Other exceptions are mentioned. (Judges i, 25 : 1 Kings ix, 20, 21.) It may be added, also, that the very *reason* annexed to the command to destroy the seven nations of Canaan, implies that the command itself was conditional, and that it was to be understood with some qualification. This reason is said to be, "*that they teach you not to do after all their abominations.*" (Deut. xx, 18.)

Now, if they had in fact repented of and forsaken all their abominations, and turned to the God of Israel with all their heart, the reason here stated would not, of course, have existed in their case.

5th. Palestine, the country inhabited by these seven nations, might be lawfully claimed by the Hebrews, the seed of Abraham, as *their own* country; for it had become such by the most authentic conveyance imaginable, by the grant of Jehovah himself. (See Gen. xiii, 15, 17; xvii, 8; xxvi, 3; xxviii, 13, 15.) In that conveyance it was expressly stated, that the land was to be theirs "*for ever, for an everlasting possession;*" which terms must here be understood in the same sense in which they are when applied to the peculiar laws and ceremonies of the Hebrews or Jews; i. e. as denoting a duration co-extensive with that of the Jewish polity. It is no objection to this interpretation of the terms, that the Hebrews did not in fact  *dwell in and occupy* that land during all the intermediate time. The grant made by Jehovah to Abraham, and afterwards renewed to Isaac and Jacob, gave to the Hebrews a *right and title* to that land, during the whole period intended by the terms "*for ever, everlasting;*" so that it became theirs *of right*, whether they should actually dwell in and occupy it during the entire interim, or not. This grant or gift of Palestine to the Hebrews, was expressly recognised in the subsequent periods of their history. It was so in the commission which Jehovah gave to Moses, when he sent him in unto Pharaoh, to demand the liberation of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. (Ex. iii, 8, 10.) It was so repeatedly, in the speech which Moses made to that people, and which is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. (Chap. iv, 1; vi, 18; viii, 1; ix, 5, 23; x, 11; xi, 31.) And, when they were on the point of passing over Jordan, to take possession of that land, the same thing was solemnly declared to them again by Joshua, for their encouragement. (Joshua i, 11.) And besides, so far as *occupancy* could give a right, they might claim a right of that kind also; for that country had been previously occupied by the patriarchs and their descendants. Nor does it appear, that they had ever relinquished that right. It may be said, however, that all this would not justify them in treating

the inhabitants of that land as they did. The answer is, if they had such a right and title to that land, as it has been shown they had, then they might *assert* that right; and by such means, and in such a way too, as should be found necessary at the time. If they should be resisted and opposed, as we know they were, by formidable combinations, they had a right (according to the then acknowledged laws of war) to oppose force to force, and, in short, to make use of such means as the exigency of the case should require. After all, if any difficulty should still remain, let it be remembered, it is nothing peculiar to this case. For,

6th. This is not the only instance in which the Lord has come out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquities. (Isa. xxvi, 20.) The judgments he inflicted on the nations of Canaan, were not more severe than what he has brought on others of mankind. Witness the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; that of Jerusalem and of the Jews, by the Romans; and especially that of the whole world, (one family only excepted), by the flood. "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth." (Ps. ix, 16.) And his conduct in all this will, doubtless, be sufficiently vindicated "in the day of the *revelation* of his righteous judgment." (Rom. ii, 5.)

#### CHAP. XXXII, 36.

"For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

The phrase, "shut up," seems here to mean a being secured in a place of secrecy, or in one of safety, as in some impregnable fortress. Such was a frequent fact among the ancient orientals, especially when there were two rival princes or principalities, of which the one sought to exterminate and destroy the other. In that case, the party persecuted, and whose life was in danger, would either get into some place of secrecy, or inclose himself in some strong fortress, or sometimes flee into some foreign country for safety. Thus, when Athaliah attempted to destroy all the seed royal, (2 Kings xi, 1), Joash, the only living child of the late king, was kept for years *shut up* in a private apartment of the tem-

ple, in order that his life might be preserved, so that he might in due time succeed to the crown. So Hadad fled into Egypt, and was there in a sense *shut up*, or secured from Solomon. (See 1 Kings xi, 14.) Jeroboam did so too, (verse 40), and for the same reason, viz. that he might be there secured against injury from Solomon, until the time should come, when, according to the prediction of the prophet Ahijah, he should possess the kingdom. The meaning, then, of the texts now under consideration seems to be this; that Jehovah would judge, avenge the cause of his people, and deliver them, when he should perceive that their own power so to do was *gone*, and that there was none *shut up* and left; that is, none *reserved* in some place of safety, to be their future deliverer. Man's extremity is God's opportunity.

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## JOSHUA.

### CHAPTER IX, VERSE 23.

"Now, therefore, ye are cursed; and there shall none of you be freed from being hewers of wood and drawers of water, for the house of my God."

To understand the full import and spirit of this malediction, it should be remembered, that among the ancients it was usual to impose the labors and burdens here specified, on the *women*, as it still is among barbarous and savage nations. See, in proof, Gen. xxiv, 11—"And he made his camels to kneel down without the city, by a well of water, at the time of the evening, even the time that *women go out to draw water*." 1 Sam. ix, 11—"And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going to draw water, and they said unto them, Is the seer here?" See, also, John iv, 7. And as the customs of the eastern people seldom vary from generation to generation, we find this same custom still prevalent among them. Dr. Shaw mentions the going out of the women to draw water, as being still a custom among the Arabs in Barbary. Hence we see the full measure of the punishment inflicted by Joshua on the Gibeonites. It consisted not only in the *drudgery* expressed by "hewing wood and drawing water," but also in



the *humiliation* attached to it; such being the service usually imposed in those countries on, and performed by, the *women*. And when it is considered in what a degraded state their females generally, and especially the menial and laborious part of them, were, (so different from what it is in our country, and wherever else christianity prevails), that humiliation itself must have appeared to the Gibeonites as a severe, perhaps the most severe, part of their punishment.

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## JUDGES.

### CHAPTER XI, VERSES 30, 31.

“And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.”

The subsequent verses of this chapter are, probably, familiar to most readers. Such of them as have any concern with Jephthah’s vow, will be considered in their proper place. The facts were these. The Ammonites invaded the land and people of Israel. Jephthah sent messengers unto their king, to know the reason of this measure, and at the same time, to dissuade him from proceeding further in hostilities. “Howbeit, the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah.” When Jephthah perceived that war with the Ammonites was inevitable, he made the requisite preparations for it; but before engaging therein, uttered the vow which has just been mentioned. On his return to Mizpeh, behold! the object that first met him, was his lovely daughter, an only child! On seeing her, the father was much agitated, and “rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.” His daughter, understanding such language as importing that her father had made a solemn vow unto the Lord, and concluding, also, from his pathetic exclamation, that his vow had



some important reference to her, surrenders herself to his disposal, with only this request, viz. that she, with her female companions, might go up and down upon the mountains, for two months, to bewail her virginity. "And it came to pass, at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow, which he had vowed; and she knew no man." Now, all on this subject which needs any illustration, may be embraced in this single inquiry, viz: Did Jephthah actually *sacrifice* his daughter, i. e. *put her to death*, or not? It must be acknowledged, that the whole story, taken together, as it stands in our version, would naturally lead the mere English reader to conclude that he did; and such, accordingly, appears to be in fact the general conclusion. But to the justness of this conclusion there are weighty objections. Consider,

1st. The character of Jephthah. He was a native Jew, and had from his childhood been brought up in the Jewish religion, of which one prominent characteristic was an absolute prohibition of the sacrifice of children. (See Lev. xx, 2, 3: Deut. xii, 31; and xviii, 10.) If it should be said, that though these texts forbade the Jews to sacrifice their children to *Molech*, they did not forbid them to sacrifice their children to *Jehovah*; such an objection would be of no weight. There was a special reason why the sacrificing of children should be particularly mentioned, in prohibitions of this nature; and that was, the constant proneness of the Jews to imitate the surrounding heathen in their idolatry, and other evil practices, and the great danger they were in from this source. The whole tenor of the Jewish law is against sacrifices of this kind, as all commentators allow. Indeed, in one of the texts cited above, (Deut xii, 31), it is expressly said, "Thou shalt not do so *unto the Lord thy God*; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods;" i. e. 'Thou shalt not serve the Lord thy God, by sacrificing your children to *him*, as they have served their gods, by sacrificing their children to *them*.' The Jews themselves must be supposed to be, in general, best acquainted with the meaning of their own law. But in the Misna, or traditional law of the Jews, and which contains their explanations of it, are found these words,

(verse 212), viz : “ If a Jew should devote (to destruction) his son or daughter, his man or maid servant, who are *Hebrews*, the devotement would be void ; because no man can devote what is not his own, or whose life he has not the absolute disposal of.” It should, also, be remembered, that Jephthah not only was of Israel, but belonged to the *true* Israel ; for he is expressly mentioned (Heb. xi, 32) as one of those pre-eminent for faith, “ of whom the world was not worthy.” In view, then, of Jephthah’s origin, of his *certain piety*, and of his acquaintance with the prohibitions of Judaism, it seems incredible that he should ever have seriously thought of sacrificing his daughter. Even if his vow had originally contemplated this ; if, as made and intended by him at the time, it was nothing less, and nothing else, than a solemn promise made to God, actually *to put to death*, in the way of sacrifice to him, whatsoever should come forth of the doors of his house, to meet him on his return ; still, for the reasons above mentioned, we cannot suppose, that when he came to see *what the object was*, that did thus meet him, he should have considered himself as bound one moment by such an obligation. He must have had knowledge, and judgment, and piety enough, to perceive that the vow he had made was a rash vow, and that he had no right at first to make a vow of this sort, without some qualifications and limitations ; but that now, since he had made it, his sin consisted in the *making* of the vow only ; not in the non-execution of it. When, therefore, we consider Jephthah’s *character*, in connection with his strong parental feelings towards his daughter, his only child, it seems incredible that he could have put her to death.

2d. Provision was made in the Jewish law, for the redemption of persons or things vowed unto the Lord. Only two sorts of vows are mentioned in the Old Testament. The Hebrew names of these are CHEREM and NEDER ; in the one or other of which all the vows made by the Jews may be comprehended. The CHEREM was the most solemn of all the vows which were made by them, being accompanied with an execration. It answers to the anathema, as used in the Septuagint. The person or thing thus vowed unto the Lord, was said to be “ devoted unto the Lord,” and could not be redeemed. (See Lev. xxvii, 28.) This sort

of vow respected either persons or things. When it respected *persons*, or, indeed, animals of any kind, it implied that they were devoted to *destruction*; but when it respected *things*, i. e. inanimate things, it implied that they were to be *utterly consumed by fire*, or to be *dedicated to the Lord*, for religious purposes. An example of this two-fold import of the CHEREM, we have in Joshua vi, 17—19, 21—24. It is said, (verse 17), “And the city shall be accursed, (Heb. CHEREM), even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord; only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.” What is meant by the CHEREM, in this place, is explained by the *exception* here mentioned, viz. that in favor of Rahab, and “all that were with her in the house.” They *only* were to *live*; which implies, that all the rest of the *persons* in the city were to be destroyed. And that the Israelites understood the CHEREM in the same sense, so far as respected not only the persons, but other *animals* in the city, is evident from the manner in which they treated them; for “they utterly *destroyed* all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.” (Verse 21.) What is meant by the CHEREM here, as it respects *inanimate* things, is explained in verse 19, viz: “But all the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are *consecrated unto the Lord*; they shall come into the *treasury of the Lord*.” But in no case could the object of the CHEREM, whether it were persons or things, be properly *redeemed* from the use, condition, or destiny, to which they had been devoted. It ought, however, to be observed, that even in case of the CHEREM, the vow could not be really valid and *obligatory*, if it were contrary to any part of the divine law; for the obvious reason, that the law of God is the paramount and supreme rule of duty, and no person has any right to execute, or even to make, any vow, or to assume any obligation, which contravenes that rule. But the NEDER, or more common vow, was, (says Thomas Hartwell Horne), “when a person engaged to do any thing, as, for instance, to bring an offering to God; or otherwise to *dedicate* any thing unto him.” The objects of this sort of vow, or the things vowed in this way, were various,

as, e. g. beasts, whether clean or unclean, lands, the tithes of lands, houses, and the person of the vower himself; of all which we have an account in Lev. xxviii chapter. All these things, with the exception only of clean beasts used for offerings, might be *redeemed*, at the rate and on the conditions specified in that chapter, although they had been vowed unto the Lord. Now the question is, which of these two sorts of vows was it that Jephthah made? The question is important, and particularly in respect to its bearing on the point now immediately before us, viz. that of *redeeming his vow*. The best way to understand what the scripture really *means*, is to attend to what it *says*, i. e. to the words, and phrases, and expressions; or, in a word, to the language therein used, and to interpret it according to the *usus loquendi* of the Hebrews. Now, in the account we have of Jephthah's vow, it is the *NEDER* only, or common vow, that is mentioned. This is the word used in the Hebrew, and not *CHEREM*, as in Lev. xxvii, 28, 29, and of which it is there said, that it shall not be redeemed. Nor is there any intimation given in the account we have of Jephthah's vow, that it was accompanied with the *CHEREM*, unless it be in the expression, "and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering;" concerning which more will be said afterwards. It should be further observed, that the persons expressly mentioned in the Old Testament, as anathematised, execrated, and devoted to destruction, were always *heathens, aliens, and enemies to God*, as the Amalekites, and Canaanites, and the inhabitants of Jericho, in particular. (See Judges i, 17: Num. xxi, 1—3.) On the whole, therefore, there is abundant evidence that Jephthah's vow was *not* of that sort which precluded the possibility of redemption. Not only might he have redeemed his daughter, even if by a rash vow he had devoted her to death; but he might have redeemed her for a *small sum* too—only thirty pieces of silver; for that was the estimation for a female. (See Lev. xxvii, 4.) And who can doubt, whether he would not cheerfully have paid this sum, rather than have sacrificed his daughter?

3d. Jephthah is no where in any other part of scripture blamed for his treatment of his daughter; a fact which seems utterly unaccountable, on the supposition that he put her to



death, since others are blamed for a sin of this nature. Ahaz is blamed for "having made his son pass through the fire, according to the abomination of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel." (2 Kings xvi, 3.) For a similar practice, the inhabitants of Jerusalem are also blamed. (Jer. xix, 5.) But Jephthah is nowhere in scripture blamed for sacrificing his daughter; which appears to be a strong presumptive evidence that he never did so.—But after all that has been said, it may still be asked, do not the *words* of Jephthah's vow themselves, in connection with the account we have of his executing his vow, show that he actually sacrificed his daughter? And how can we consistently understand them in any other sense? Let us attend, then, more particularly to the *vow itself*. This, as it stands in our English Bible, is as follows:—"And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house, to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." Now, the important remark I would make in this place is, that the Hebrew admits of a translation *in two other ways*. It may be translated thus:—"Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house, to meet me, shall surely be the Lord's; *or* I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." The Hebrew particle *vau* frequently means *or*; and frequently is it so rendered by our translators. In proof of this remark, I refer to the following passages, as specimens only of many others that might be adduced, viz. Gen. xli, 44: "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand *or* foot in all the land of Egypt." Ex. xii, 5—"Ye shall take it (i. e. the lamb) out from the sheep, *or* from the goats." Ex. xxi, 15—"And he that smiteth his father *or* his mother, shall be surely put to death." Verse 17—"And he that curseth his father *or* his mother, shall be surely put to death." Num. xxii, 26—"And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn, either to the right hand *or* to the left." Deut. iii, 24—"For what God is there in heaven *or*



in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might." 2 Sam. iii, 29—"Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab, one that hath an issue, *or* that is a leper, *or* that leaneth on a staff, *or* that falleth on the sword, *or* that lacketh bread." In all these passages, the Hebrew particle or conjunction *vau*, evidently means *or*, and is so rendered by our translators. The words of Jephthah's vow may, therefore, be translated from the Hebrew, as above, viz:—"Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house, &c. shall surely be the Lord's; *or* I will offer it up for a burnt-offering;" as it is the same Hebrew particle used in this case, that is used in the texts just cited. And if such be the import of Jephthah's vow, we may well suppose, that in making it he had a sort of mental reserve, which would allow him to act as the *exigency of the case* might require; i. e. either to dedicate to the Lord the object that should meet him, or to offer it up for a burnt-offering, according as the object itself should prove to be *fit* and *proper* for the one or the other of these purposes. But the words of Jephthah's vow may be translated in another way still, thus:—"Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house, to meet me, shall surely be the Lord's; and I will offer him (i. e. *to him*, Jehovah) a burnt-offering." For examples of a similar idiom in the Hebrew, let the following passages, as they stand in that language, be carefully consulted, viz: Gen. xxxvii, 4, and xxxix, 21: 2 Sam. xv, 4, and xx, 5: 1 Kings i, 4, and xx, 9: Prov. xxviii, 22: Ezek. xxi, 32. According to this translation, Jephthah's vow will consist of two parts. The first is, that whatsoever, i. e. whatsoever *person* or *object* should come forth of the doors of his house, to meet him, on his return, should surely be the Lord's; should be *dedicated, consecrated for ever to his service*. The second is, that he would, besides this, offer to Jehovah a burnt-offering. The difference in meaning between this translation, and that contained in our English Bibles, consists in this. According to the latter, the *very same* object or person, who should "surely be the Lord's," was to be offered up for a burnt-offering. According to the translation which I have last given, they were to be *different* objects.

The person that first met him from the doors of his house, was to be the Lord's, dedicated for ever to him ; and besides this, he was to offer to the Lord, a burnt-offering. It is readily seen, that so far as Jephthah's vow respected the person or object who should meet him from the doors of his house, its import might be the same, whichever of these translations, which I have given, should be adopted : And every Hebrew scholar knows that either of these translations is admissible. Accordingly, it is believed, that so far as Jephthah's vow respected his daughter, it is to be interpreted accordingly ; and that when it is said, " Her father did with her according to his vow which he had vowed ;" the meaning is, not that he *put her to death* ; but that he gave her wholly *to the Lord* ; i. e. dedicated her for ever to his service, in a state of perpetual virginity, and of seclusion from ordinary intercourse with the world. Such, also, is the opinion of many able divines.

But as there are objections to this interpretation ; and as it is our duty to " prove all things," so far as we can ; and to " hold fast that which is good ;" let us candidly attend to what can be urged on the other side. The advocates for the sentiment, that Jephthah actually *sacrificed* his daughter, usually alledge the following things :—

1st. The letter of the vow itself. It has been already shown, that the original may properly be translated in two other ways, neither of which would favor the idea of an actual sacrifice.

2d. The agitation of Jephthah's mind, when he saw his daughter. It is supposed that he would not have been thus agitated, had he not foreseen that she must soon be sacrificed, and that, too, by his own hands. But such agitation may be, in a good degree, accounted for, on the supposition, he knew that this daughter, his only child, was to be for ever *secluded* from him, and devoted to the Lord, in a state of perpetual virginity ; a state which was not only very disreputable among the Jews, but (as she was his only child) must, in her case, deprive him of all prospect and possibility of having any posterity, to bear up his name in Israel.

3d. Her request for permission to bewail her virginity for two months. (Verse 37.) It has been said, if she was to

be dedicated by her father to the Lord, in perpetual virginity, such a request would have been needless and absurd ; as in that case, she would have had a whole life to lament it in. But the very phraseology here used, seems rather to confirm the interpretation I have given. For observe, she desired liberty to bewail her *virginity*, not her approaching *death*. If she knew that she was so soon to be sacrificed by her father, why did she not bewail her *death* also, as well as her virginity? Again, her design in this request might have been, to get some time for society with her companions, before her perpetual seclusion from them, and for *social* lamentation ; for she says, “ Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, *I and my fellows.*”

4th. The custom of the daughters of Israel, lamenting the daughter of Jephthah four days in a year. To this it may be replied, that one of the meanings of the Hebrew word *TANNOTH*, (as may be seen in Buxtorf’s Lexicon), is in Latin, *confabulari*, i. e. *to talk with*. In Judges v, 11, this same verb is translated *rehearse* : “ There shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord.” The comment of Kimchi, the celebrated Jewish expositor, on this 40th verse, is in these words :—“ *Ut scilicet amicis colloquiis eam de virginitate, et statu vitæ solitario consolarentur :*” In English thus :—“ That indeed, with their friendly discourse, they might comfort her concerning her virginity, and her solitary state of life.” The Chaldee, and R. Solomon, explain the above verb, by “ *ad lamentandum ;*” and immediately add, by way of comment, “ *nempe super virginitate ejus ;*” that is, “ to wit, on account of her virginity.” Whence it is evident, that learned Jewish doctors, who must be supposed to have understood their own language best, have understood this verse as meaning, that the daughters of Israel went four times in a year, to *converse with* the daughter of Jephthah, to condole with her on account of her virginity, and solitary state of life, and to comfort her under it ; all which plainly implies that she was still *alive*. But take the passage as it reads : “ The daughters of Israel went to lament the daughter of Jephthah.” The question is, *what* in her, or respecting her, did they lament? It is not here said, they lamented her *death* ;

and for us to say they did, is to beg the question. They might have lamented only what they and Jephthah's daughter had lamented before, viz. her *virginity*. On the whole, though some difficulties attend every interpretation of Jephthah's vow, which has been hitherto adopted, that which I have advocated has the fewest and the least, and is certainly admissible.

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## I. SAMUEL.

### CHAPTER IX, VERSE 7.

"Then said Saul to his servant, But behold if we go, what shall we bring to the man? For the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: What have we?"

For the illustration of this text, the following remarks from Maundrel, a modern traveller, appear very useful, and very necessary to be remembered. In describing his journey through Syria, he has these words, as cited by Harmer: "It is counted uncivil to visit in this country, without an offering in hand. All great men expect it, as a kind of tribute due to their character and authority; and look upon themselves as affronted, and indeed defrauded, when this compliment is omitted. Even in familiar visits amongst inferior people, you shall seldom have them come, without bringing a flower, or an orange, or some other such token of their respect, to the person visited; the Turks, in this, keeping up the ancient oriental custom hinted in 1 Sam. ix, 7: 'If we go, says Saul, what shall we bring the man of God? There is not a present,' &c.; which words are, questionless, to be understood in conformity to this eastern custom; as relating to a *token of respect*, and not a *price of divination*." This last remark of Maundrel is particularly to be remembered; as many people, when they read of the *presents* made to the ancient prophets, as of this to Samuel, of that by Jeroboam's queen to Ahijah, (1 Kings xiv, 3), and of that which a Syrian nobleman would have made to Elisha, (2 Kings v, 5, 15), are apt to think those prophets were a *mercenary* set of men, (like modern fortune-tellers), who would not reveal any secrets, nor foretell important future events, without a *reward*,



and that too beforehand ! Now, to think so, and especially to say so, must manifest either a deplorable ignorance of both ancient and modern oriental customs, or (what is still worse) an utter want of candor, and a spirit too much like that of Elymas, the sorcerer. (Acts xiii, 10.) All that needs to be said on this subject is, that the offering of presents, not only to distinguished men in both the civil and ecclesiastical departments, but to inferiors also, was, of old, a frequent *custom* in the east ; and, as appears from the journals of our Asiatic missionaries, is so at present.

#### CHAP. XXVIII, 11, 12.

“Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee ? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice ; and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me ? for thou art Saul.”

With the story respecting Saul and the witch of Endor, common readers have been much perplexed ; and not they only. Expositors of scripture have been much perplexed with it. Some circumstances relative to it are really mysterious, and will probably remain so, until the light of another world shall reveal them. The main, the most interesting part of the story, and the only particular in it to which I shall now directly attend, is that which relates to the *resurrection* or *reappearance* of Samuel. The question then is—*Did this woman really raise, bring up Samuel, or not ?* This question, indeed, may be considered as divisible into two, viz : Was Samuel, the *true* Samuel, in fact raised up at all ; or was it only a *spectre*, an *apparition* ? And, if he was in fact, in his proper person, raised up, did *this woman* raise him up ; or was his resurrection owing, in any sense or degree, to any agency of hers ? On the first of these questions, some may be ready to decide as soon as they hear it proposed ; for what can be more evident, it may be asked, than that it was the real Samuel that appeared, since it is expressly said, “The woman saw Samuel”—“Saul perceived that it was Samuel :” And besides, a conversation of some length on matters of state is recorded, as having passed between Samuel and Saul. Well, then, for the present, be it so.



Say, if you choose, that it was the real Samuel that appeared, and not a mere spectre, nor (as some interpreters have strangely supposed) *Satan* personating Samuel. The next question is—Did this woman raise him up; or were his resurrection and reappearance owing to any stratagem or power of hers? I answer, no: For, not to insist on the absurdity which attends the supposition, that the Lord of all should permit a woman of her character and occupation, to disturb the repose of such an holy man and distinguished prophet, and even to raise the dead, (a work, which in 2 Cor. i, 9, and elsewhere, is ascribed to God); it may be observed, that from the very face of the account, as it stands, it would rather appear that she had no agency, either efficient or instrumental, in the resurrection and reappearance of Samuel. “Whom shall I bring up unto thee,” says she to Saul. “And he (Saul) said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice.” Does it not hence appear, that immediately after Saul had said, “Bring me up Samuel,” Samuel appeared. The narrative is such as to show, that these two events, Saul’s charge to the woman, and the reappearance of Samuel, were simultaneous, or as nearly so as they possibly could be. It shows, at least, that there could not have been so long an interim between them, as to have allowed her an opportunity to bring her magical arts into operation, or indeed to do any thing at all. Accordingly, it seems she did nothing at all in this business; that she did not even leave the place where she was; that instantly on Saul’s saying, “Bring me up Samuel,” the holy prophet appeared, and doubtless by some other power than hers. It is said, “When the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice.” This shows her astonishment, and agitation of mind—astonishment, that he had so suddenly appeared—agitation, occasioned by his venerable and almost divine appearance; for when Saul inquired of her the cause of her being so fearfully agitated, she replied, “I saw *gods* ascending out of the earth :...An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle.” But would she have been so astonished, and agitated, if nothing unexpected had taken place; nothing but the ordinary effect of her own professional incantations? It has been deemed pro-

per to enlarge somewhat on this subject, because by infidels and the adversaries of the Bible, the case of the witch of Endor, together with that of the magicians of Egypt, has been often alledged in proof of their position, viz: that miracles, admitting them to have been wrought, are no demonstration of the divine commission of those who wrought them. Or, if they must be so considered, then, say they, they prove the divine mission of the magicians of Egypt, and of the witch of Endor; and prove, by necessary consequence, the equally authorised claims to a divine origin, of such contradictory schemes of religion as that of the Bible, and that of idolaters and conjurers! Now, it is evident that those who make this objection take it for granted, that there is as much, or at least as real *evidence*, that these persons performed real miracles, as there is that the prophets, Jesus Christ, and his apostles, did. But this we deny. As to the exploits of the magicians of Egypt, see my notes on that subject. In regard to the case now immediately before us, it may be observed, that whether it were a mere spectre, or Samuel's real person, that appeared to Saul, a *divine*, and not a *magical* agency, was, no doubt, the cause of that event, as well as of those events which followed, viz. the overthrow of the Israelitish army, and the death of Saul, and of his sons.—By the way, and in conclusion, I would remark, that the whole story relative to Saul and the witch of Endor, seems a decisive proof that the Jews believed in a separate state of existence; and believed, not only that the soul was in a state of conscious existence, after it had left the body, but, also, that the deceased were sometimes permitted to make, in some way or other, interesting communications to their surviving friends on earth.

#### CHAP. XXXI, 4.

“Then said Saul unto his armor-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armor-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore, Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.”

But an Amalekite tells David, “So *I* stood upon him, and slew him, because *I* was sure that he could not live af-

ter that he was fallen ; and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was upon his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord." (2 Sam. i, 10.) In one passage, we are told that Saul slew himself ; in the other, that an Amalekite slew him. Here is indeed an inconsistency. But the sacred writer is not blameable for this ; nor can any valid objection be hence drawn against his divine inspiration. The business of the sacred writers, *as such*, was simply to make a faithful *record* of those facts or events which God would have them communicate to mankind. See my notes on 2 Timothy iii, 16 ; where it was shown that it is not necessary, in order to the whole Bible's being the *word of God*, that every thing *recorded* in it, as having been said or done by one and another, as, e. g. by Satan, by evil demons, and by wicked men, should have been immediately dictated by the Spirit of God, as said or done *by them* ; nor that every thing *recorded* in the Bible, as having been said or done by one and another, should be *approved* of by God, or should be, in itself considered, agreeable to the holy nature of God. We have in the Bible the speeches and remarks of Satan, and wicked men, some of which are certainly not true. Of this nature, very evidently, is the declaration of the young Amalekite. This was merely his own story ; the sacred penman having had no other concern with it than to record it ; and it has all the appearance of being a fiction and a falsehood, framed for ingratiating himself into favor with David. Indeed, some of the circumstances attending the young man's story, particularly his exhibition before David, of the crown that had been on Saul's head, and of the bracelet that had been on his arm, sufficiently proved the *fact*, that Saul was dead ; but they did not prove *who* it was that killed him. But this we learn from the preceding chapter. In the account there given of the battle of the Israelites with the Philistines, it is expressly said, "Saul took a sword, and fell upon it." And that the wound he thereby gave himself was a mortal one, appears from the very next verse, where it is said, "His armor-bearer saw that Saul was *dead*." It seems, however, that David believed, for the present, in the truth of what this young man said, relative to the manner of Saul's death ; as, indeed, he

well might, not having received (as appears from the context) any other intelligence relative to that event, and his story being attended with such plausible circumstances. But this is no evidence that the story itself was true. It shows only, that David was for the present imposed upon and deceived; as he doubtless discovered afterwards, in consequence of further information.—In the dreadful judgment, which, by the providence of God, so speedily befel this youth, (verses 15, 16), we see the truth of the wise man's observation:—"A false witness shall not be unpunished; and he that telleth lies shall not escape." (Proverbs xix, 5.)

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## II. SAMUEL.

### CHAPTER XII, VERSES 21—23.

"Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, while the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me."

Without some knowledge of oriental customs, it will be very difficult to enter into the true spirit of these verses; more especially to understand fully the *reason*, or *reasons*, why the servants of David were so much astonished at the conduct of their master, on this occasion. From Sir John Chardin, as cited by Harmer, (vol. 2, page 495), we learn, that "it is usual in the east to leave a relation of a person deceased to weep and mourn; till on the third or fourth day, at farthest, the relations and friends go to see him, cause him to eat, lead him to a bath, and cause him to put on new vestments; he having before thrown himself upon the ground." One reason, therefore, of the astonishment of David's servants at his behavior, was, that he did not observe the usual forms and ceremonies of mourning. Without waiting "until the third or fourth day," for others to come and see him,



and minister unto him, "David arose from the earth" *immediately*, on hearing of the child's death, "and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and ate bread," (verse 20); and did all these things *himself*, without waiting for the arrival and assistance of his relations and friends. Again; most readers may not perceive the *whole* of the import of verse 23:—"But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me." The general opinion is, that the reason why David did not fast for the child, after it was actually dead, was, his perceiving that the will of Heaven was done; that the child's state, as it respected this world and the world to come, was immutably fixed by the providence of God; and that, of course, all his fasting and praying for the continuation, or rather restoration of its life, would be in vain. Such, unquestionably, was *a* reason, perhaps the principal one, why he ceased fasting. But it appears there was another reason, also, for it. Maimonides, a noted Jewish writer, says, "The Jews did not lament infants, who died before they were thirty days old." The inquisitive reader naturally asks, why there was this peculiarity in their feelings and practice, relative to infants who died under this tender age? The true answer probably is, they believed such infants were *saved*, and of course *happy*.

#### CHAP. XXIV, 1, 2, 9, 10.

"And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. For the king said to Joab, the captain of the host, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people. And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men, that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men. And David's heart smote him, after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done; and now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."



The whole difficulty relative to these passages, consists in understanding how David's numbering his people could be a *sin*. That David believed the act to be sinful, is evident from his humble confession, and earnest petition for pardon, in verse 10th; and that it was *really* sinful, and to an high degree so, is certain from the dreadful judgment of pestilence, which Jehovah brought upon Israel for this very act, and by which seventy thousand men were slain. (Verse 15.) But *why* should David's numbering his people be such a great sin? Is it not proper for a ruler to know, not only the general character and circumstances, but also the populousness and physical strength, of the nation or people over which he presides? And, particularly, if that nation be exposed to frequent depredations and wars, from hostile circumjacent nations, as the Jewish nation was, is it not proper, nay necessary, that its king, or chief magistrate, should become acquainted with its *military* strength, that he might know what would be its ability to contend with them, in case of an invasion? Political wisdom would surely suggest the propriety and necessity of such information; and why, in a *moral* sense, should there be any thing wrong in it, or in using the means necessary to obtain it? We believe there is nothing wrong, politically or morally, in taking a census of the inhabitants of the United States. How then could David's numbering his people be such a sin? To this it may be replied, that when on former occasions a census was taken, it was done by an express command from Jehovah. There were two numberings of the people in the time of Moses; and in both these instances, the enumeration was made by an express divine command. (See Num. i, 1—4, and xxvi, 1—5.) But David's numbering of the people appears to have originated with himself. We have no account of his having received any divine command for this purpose. His sin, therefore, might have consisted, at least in part, in doing that *of himself*, which, for ought we know, could have been authorised only by a divine command. Again; the Lord had required that when the people were numbered, half a shekel from each should be collected for the service of the sanctuary. But as no mention is made of such collection, either in David's order to Joab, or in Joab's pro-

ceedings consequent thereon, it is probable the collection was omitted. After all, David's sin in this affair consisted principally in his *pride*; as Hezekiah's did, when he showed his treasures to the messengers of the king of Babylon, (2 Kings xx, 13); and as Nebuchadnezzar's did, when he said, "Is not this great Babylon, that *I* have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel iv, 30.) David's pride and ambition prompted him to count the numbers of his people, to ascertain what a great and warlike nation it was, over which he presided, of whose prosperity he had been the principal instrument, and which he was soon to leave to his successor. Such we must suppose to have been the *essence* and *sum* of David's sin in this affair.

#### VERSE 24.

"And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: Neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God, of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen, for fifty shekels of silver."

But in the parallel place, (1 Chron. xxi, 25), it is said, "So David gave to Ornan, (or Araunah), for the place, six hundred shekels of gold, by weight." Is there not an inconsistency, or rather a contradiction, between these two passages? The infidel may exultingly pretend there is; and the superficial reader may not be able to discern and expose the fallacy of the pretence. But a careful attention to these two texts will show, that there is no inconsistency between them. In the first cited passage, mention is made only of the *threshing-floor*, and the *oxen*: For these, it is said, David gave fifty shekels of silver. In the last cited passage, the *place* is mentioned, which must have comprehended much more than the threshing-floor and oxen. The *place* included, probably, the entire tract of the mountain on which the temple was afterwards built, together with "the oxen for burnt-offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat-offering." For the *place*, thus extensive and comprehensive, David gave six hundred shekels of gold. We see, then, that if the two passages do not

speak exactly the *same* thing, they do not speak contrary things; that there is no discrepancy between them, when rightly understood; and that they are entirely consistent with each other.

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## I. KINGS.

### CHAPTER II, VERSES 8, 9.

“And, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse, in the day when I went to Mahanaim: But he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death by the sword. Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless; for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.”

As to the ninth verse, with which my chief concern is at present, it is evident, that the middle clause of it, viz. “for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him,” ought to be understood as a parenthesis. The prominent subject of the verse is David’s charge to Solomon, respecting Shimei. The middle clause of the verse is an apostrophe to Solomon, and has no direct concern with the charge itself. The charge itself, therefore, is this:—“Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless, but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.” But still a difficulty attends this passage, as it stands in our version. That David, a “man after God’s own heart,” who had, in such an eminent degree, the spirit of the gospel, and of course the spirit of forgiveness, should command Solomon to put Shimei to death, and that, too, after he had expressly pardoned him, (2 Sam. xix, 23), and when he himself was about to “go the way of all the earth,” is, indeed, mysterious and perplexing. Hence arises a stumbling-block to the weak believer, and matter of cavil and of triumph to the captious infidel. Infidels have always been ready enough to find fault with David in other respects; and if in this, also, he is so greatly censurable as they suppose, he must, it seems, merit a representation far different from that which Christians, and christian preachers, usually give of him. But

let us attend more directly to the charge itself:—"Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." Now, the important remark to be made relative to this verse is, that it may be translated from the original thus:—"Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless; *nor* his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." The Hebrew particle *VAU*, or *VAV*, which in our version is rendered *but*, and which in that now given is rendered *nor*, as occurring in the Hebrew Bible, is used with no less than sixteen different shades of meaning. (See Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon.) Its first and most natural meaning corresponds to that of the English conjunction *and*; but it is used in numerous and various other senses. The remark, however, which has a direct bearing on the point now before us, and which may be instructive to all, as well as interesting to the Hebrew student, is, that when the particle *VAU* comes immediately after another and a *negative* particle, (such as means in English, *not*, *neither*, *nor*), it also (*viz.* the Hebrew particle *VAU*) has, very frequently, a negative meaning attached to it; or, at least, extends the force of the negative equally to the last member of the sentence. A few examples may illustrate the truth of this remark. "Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew; neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings." (2 Sam. i, 21.) The Hebrew particle here prefixed to the word *SEDEE*, (fields), is *VAU*, which is here justly translated *nor*; because it is twice in the same verse preceded by the negative particle *AL*, (not, or nor.) "But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains, that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel." (1 Kings xxii, 31.) In this case, also, the Hebrew particle connected with *GADŌL*, (great), is *VAU*, which the sense evidently requires to be rendered *nor*, and which, accordingly, our translators have thus rendered. For though the particle itself, simply and abstractedly considered, has a connective, rather than a disjunctive signification; yet, when immediately preceded by a negative particle, as in this case, it also has a negative or prohibitory meaning attached to it. "Give me neither poverty nor riches." (Prov. xxx, 8.) Here, again,



the particle connected with *ESHER*, (riches), is *VAU*, which our translators have rightly rendered *nor*. Let the Hebrew scholar, for his further satisfaction on this point, examine in the original the following passages:—Ex. xx, 4; Lev. xix, 12: Deut. vii, 25, and xxxiii, 6: 2 Kings vii, 10: 1 Chron. xxi, 24: 2 Chron. i, 11: Job iii, 10, and xxxii, 9: Ps. i, 5; xxvi, 9, and xlv, 19: Prov. iii, 25; vi, 4, and xxx, 3: Isa. xiv, 21: Jer. xv, 17, and xix, 4: Ezek. xiii, 5. Enough has been said to show, that the passage before us may as well, or with more propriety, be translated as Dr. Kennicott and various other Hebraists have translated it—thus:—“Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless; *nor* his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.” And if the passage *may* be thus understood; that is, if it may be understood as a *prohibition*, rather than as a *command* for Solomon to put Shimei to death; other circumstances seem strongly to recommend, and to require, such a rendering, and such an understanding of the words. For,

1st. David had already *pardoned* Shimei for his past offence against him. The history of the affair is affecting:—“And Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah, to meet king David. And Shimei, the son of Gera, fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan; and said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me; neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely, the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart: For thy servant doth know that I have sinned. Therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph, to go down to meet my lord the king. And David said, Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For do not I know that I am this day king over Israel? Therefore, the king said unto Shimei, thou shalt *not die*; and the king swore unto him.” (2 Sam. xix, 16, &c.) To say with some, that David pardoned Shimei only *for the present*; or with others, that David meant merely that *he* would not put him to death; does not appear by any means satisfactory. The declaration is absolute and decisive—“*Thou shalt not die*;” i. e. thou



shalt not be put to death for this offence ; and this declaration was accompanied with a solemn oath.

2d. Solomon, who must have rightly understood the meaning of this his father's charge, did not understand it as a direction to put Shimei to death, for his previous offence against his father : For after his ascension to the throne, Solomon "sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither : For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die : Thy blood shall be upon thine own head." (1 Kings ii, 36, 37.) Now, surely, in all this there is nothing that looks like any design on the part of Solomon, to put Shimei to death. On the contrary, the language here used implies, that so long as Shimei should dwell quietly in Jerusalem, and confine himself to his appointed limits, his life would be safe. True, Solomon *did* put Shimei to death afterwards ; but it was for a subsequent offence ; an offence not against his father David, but against himself. Solomon, as we have seen, ordered Shimei to confine himself to Jerusalem : But Shimei transgressed this order ; for at the end of three years, he went out of Jerusalem to Gath, to seek his servants. (Verse 40.) Solomon, hearing of this, sent for Shimei, and expostulated with him on the iniquity of his conduct, in disobeying him, and in violating at the same time his own solemn promise and oath ; and ordered him, for *such* disobedience, to be put to death. Shimei's wickedness towards king David, was indeed mentioned by Solomon, as a reason why the Lord would not leave him unpunished. At the same time it is evident, that the primary, principal, and only direct reason of Shimei's destruction by Solomon, was his disobedience to Solomon's order before mentioned. If, then, Solomon did not in fact put Shimei to death for his offence against his father David, but permitted him to live some years afterwards, it is manifest, that he did not understand the charge now under consideration, as requiring him to put Shimei to death for such offence. But what, then, is the real meaning of the charge ? Answer : It appears to be, as if David had said, 'Thou knowest Shimei, the son of Gera, who once

cursed me so bitterly. He is verily guilty, and deserves to die. Now, therefore, as thou art a wise man, thou wilt readily know what management of him will be most proper. Hold him not guiltless; for he is by no means so, though I have pardoned him for his offence against me. But he is still a wicked, artful, and dangerous man. Have your eye upon him; watch him closely; beware of giving him too much liberty. In short, let your treatment of him be such, as to show that you consider him as still a wicked and a dangerous man: But do not put him to death for an offence which I have already pardoned.'—I shall add only, that as the above interpretation of this passage is certainly admissible; so it completely clears the character, and justifies the conduct of David, in this particular.

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## II. KINGS.

### CHAPTER V, VERSE 18.

“In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon, to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.”

That this singular request of Naaman to the prophet Elisha, may be rightly understood, it is necessary, first of all, to inquire and ascertain what it refers to; whether to his *past*, or to his proposed *future* conduct. Did Naaman mean to be understood as praying the Lord to pardon his *past* idolatrous worship in the temple of Rimmon; or, as requesting a license for the *future continuation* of such worship? Those who suppose he meant the first, alledge, in support of their opinion, the prophet's reply to him, “Go in peace;” a reply, which they can easily understand and justify, on the ground, that Elisha intended hereby to announce to the *penitent* Syrian, (for penitent they suppose him to have been), a pardon for his past idolatry; but which they can neither justify nor understand, on the other supposition. Now, from the words of the petition themselves, (especially when taken in connection with the prophet's reply to him),

it seems most probable, that neither of these things was directly intended by Naaman. Probably, all Naaman meant in this address to Elisha, was, to request the liberty and privilege of performing, or at least of attending, certain ceremonies "in the idol's temple;" not as *acts of worship* to the idol, but simply as expressions of loyalty and courtesy to his prince. His words *may* be understood in this sense. Such, accordingly, is in substance the interpretation adopted by Henry, Scott, and others, and seems attended with the fewest difficulties. Some difficulty, however, still remains. Was there not some degree of guilt in Naaman's proceeding even so far as this? How could such conduct consist with the unqualified requisition, "Have *no* fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them?" And how could the prophet have said to him, "Go in peace," even if no more than this had been his meaning? Though Naaman was not an Israelite; though, as holding a high station in Benhadad's court, he might have been expected of course to accompany his master, when he went into the house of Rimmon, and might have considered it as his duty so to do; still, as a determined worshipper of the God of Israel, (verse 17), it was inconsistent and wrong for him to have given, in any way, the least countenance to idolatry. But, doubtless, we do not understand all the circumstances in Naaman's case. The prophet perceived some favorable things in this man. He perceived that conviction had gotten hold of his mind; so far, at least, that he was convinced that bowing himself in the house of Rimmon was *not right*. Those convictions, we may suppose, he left to work in their own way, and to produce their desired effect, with the hope, that, as his mind became more enlightened, his faith strengthened, and his judgment matured, he would discern and renounce the errors which still adhered to him, in relation to this subject, and protest against all idolatry. In view of the good things which the prophet saw in this man, he felt authorised to say to him, in general terms, "Go in peace;" hoping, that so far as he was in this respect differently minded from what he ought to be, "God would reveal even this unto him," in his own good time and way.

## I. CHRONICLES.

## CHAPTER XIX, VERSE 7.

“So they hired thirty and two thousand chariots, and the king of Maachah, to help them.”

Passages of this kind do not affect any fundamental article of the christian faith, whatever interpretation we may put upon them. And the only reason why this text is noticed at all in this work, is, that the fact herein stated appears incredible. In explanation, it may be observed, that the Hebrew word here used does not always denote chariots. It is a generic noun, and signifies also, sometimes, *cavalry*, or riders, mounted on chariots or horses, but who occasionally served as infantry, or foot-soldiers. And that such is the proper import of the word in this place, appears from 2 Sam. x, 6, where we are told, that thirty-two thousand was the number of *men* actually hired by these Ammonites, of the Syrians, besides a thousand men, whom they hired of king Maachah.

## II. CHRONICLES.

## CHAPTER XXXV, VERSE 24.

“His servants, therefore, took him (Josiah) out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the *sepulchres* of his fathers; and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.”

In Bishop Lowth's seventh lecture “On the sacred poetry of the Hebrews,” I find the following remarks on the Jewish *sepulchres*:—“The sepulchres of the Hebrews, at least those of respectable persons, and those which hereditarily belonged to the principal families, were extensive caves, or vaults, excavated from the native rock by art and manual labor. The roofs of them in general were arched; and some were so spacious, as to be supported by colonnades. All round the sides were cells, for the reception of the sarcophagi; these were properly ornamented with sculpture, and each was placed in its proper cell. The cave or sepulchre admitted no light, being closed by a great stone, which was rolled to the mouth of the narrow passage or en-



trance. Many of these receptacles are still extant in Judea ; two in particular are more magnificent than all the rest, and are supposed to be the sepulchres of the kings. One of these is in Jerusalem, and contains twenty-four cells ; the other, containing twice that number, is in a place without the city."

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## NEHEMIAH.

### CHAPTER VI, VERSE 5.

"Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me, in like manner, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand."

Why this letter should have been sent *open*, and, indeed, why any notice at all should have been taken of this circumstance of the letter, it is impossible to determine, without some other information than what the Bible affords. For the illustration of this passage, we must again refer to oriental customs. Harmer has shown, that the custom of the ancient Asiatics was, and that the custom of the Turks to this day is, when they send letters to *common* and *mean* persons, to send them *open*, and unenclosed : But when they wrote to *persons of distinction*, they enclosed their letters in satin bags, "with a paper tied to it, directed and sealed, and with an ivory button tied on the wax." It is evident, therefore, that Sanballat's sending an *open* letter to Nehemiah, was designed for some other purpose than merely that the people should read it, and being terrified thereby, should forsake their work, from fear of the Persians. It was, it seems, designed as an *insult* on Nehemiah, as a contemptuous treatment of him, and as an indication that he (Sanballat) would be so far from recognising those claims to authority, which Nehemiah had begun to assert, and which he was about to assert with still greater decision, that he would not even pay him any respect above what was due to ordinary men.

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## PSALMS.

### PSALM XXII, VERSE 3.

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."



The word TEHILLÔTH, translated praises, properly signifies *irradiations*. Accordingly, Bishop Lowth translates the verse thus:—"Thou that inhabitest the irradiations—the glory of Israel." Surely praises, strictly such, can never be *inhabited*. The word refers to those resplendent manifestations which Jehovah made of himself; sometimes in light and in fire, as at Sinai, (Ex. xix, 18); sometimes in the pillar of cloud and of fire, (Ex. xiii, 21); sometimes over the cherubim, (Ezek. ix, 3, and x, 4.) In those irradiations, Jehovah's glorious presence indeed was; there He inhabited; and by or through them, He was praised, and glorified.

PSALM LI, 16.

"For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings."

But did not Jehovah both desire and require sacrifices under the former dispensation? None acquainted with the Old Testament, and believing it to be his word, can deny it. What, then, is the meaning of this passage? Answer: It must mean, either that Jehovah did not desire or require sacrifices *comparatively*; that is, the sacrifice of brute animals was of very little importance, when compared with that of a broken and contrite spirit, (verse 17); or, which is most probable, that no animal sacrifices whatever would be accepted as an atonement for murder—one of the sins which it is the purpose of this penitential psalm to confess and lament. The statute was, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Indeed, by the laws of Jehovah, both murder and adultery were punishable by death. No Jewish sacrifice could expiate the guilt, or save the life of the offender.

PSALM LIX, 14, 15.

"And at evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied."

The following illustration of this passage, by Robinson, in his Greek Lexicon, may be interesting in one view, if in no other. It may serve as an additional confirmation of

what has been repeatedly asserted and verified in this work, viz. the frequent allusions made in the holy scriptures to ancient oriental customs ; many of which, and this among the rest, continue the same even to this day. "In the east, (says our author), dogs, with the exception of those used in hunting, have no masters, but wander free in the streets, and feed upon the offals which are cast into the gutters. (Ex. xxii, 31.) Being often at the point of starvation, they devour corpses, (1 Kings xiv, 11, and xvi, 4) ; and in the night, even attack living men. They are objects of universal abhorrence ; and hence to call any one a dog, is an expression of contemptuous reproach." (See Job xxx, 1 : 1 Sam. xvii, 43 : 2 Kings viii, 13.)

PSALM LXXII, 6—17.

"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass ; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish ; and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion, also, from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him ; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents ; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts : Yea, all kings shall fall down before him ; all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth ; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence ; and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba. Prayer, also, shall be made for him continually ; and daily shall he be praised. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains ; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon ; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever ; his name shall be continued as long as the sun ; and men shall be blessed in him. All nations shall call him blessed."

That the preceding verses relate *primarily* and literally to the person and glorious reign of Solomon, is undeniable.

But that in a *secondary* and *spiritual* sense, they are referable to the person and administration of "a greater than Solomon," is conceded by the best expositors, and is, indeed, very evident from the words themselves. By a beautiful allusion to various and numerous objects in the natural world, (objects with which the Jews were perfectly familiar), the Psalmist here represents, as lucidly as the darkness of the age in which he lived would permit, the character, extent, and duration, of the then future reign of the divine Messiah. It is almost needless to add, for every Christian knows, that this representation is not overstrained, but has been fully verified by facts. Yes, wherever the blessed Jesus has reigned by his word and Spirit; wherever (to use the language of this psalm) he has "come down like rain upon the mown grass;" there the righteous have flourished like trees planted by the rivers of water, (Ps. 1, 2); and abundance of peace has been enjoyed. They that dwell in the wilderness, and in the new settlements, have cordially bowed before him, and his enemies have been confounded. Yea, kings and emperors, queens and empresses, have fallen down before him, and have become nursing fathers and nursing mothers to his church. Jesus has delivered the needy when he cried; the poor also, and him that had none to help him. He has spared the poor and needy, and saved the souls of the needy. He has redeemed their soul from deceit and violence; and precious has their blood been in his sight. Our Redeemer shall live for ever and ever. Prayer, also, shall be made, not only to him, and through him, but for him, for the increase and perpetuity of his kingdom; and eternally shall he be praised by the celestial hierarchy, and by all his redeemed people. To the number of "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," they will say with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." (Rev. v, 11, 12.) Indeed, of him *only* can it be said, with strict propriety, (as in verse 17), that his name shall endure *for ever*; that his name shall be *continued as long as the sun*; and that *all nations* shall call him blessed.—The preceding quotations and remarks prepare the way for one important re-

mark, viz : Many, perhaps most parts of the Psalms, have a two-fold meaning ; a *literal*, and a *spiritual* or *mystical* one. The truth of this position, and its importance, as it respects us Gentiles, Bishop Horne has ingeniously illustrated, in the preface to his excellent "Commentary on the Book of Psalms ;" and it should be carefully remembered, by all such as wish to enter into the true spirit of this most precious part of the sacred writings.—As we have attended to the views which David had of the Messiah, and to the description he gave of his glorious reign on earth, about one thousand years before his incarnation ; it may be proper to hear, also, what Maimonides, a noted Jewish writer of modern times, has to say on this subject. "As to the days of the Messiah, (says he), they are the time when the kingdom shall be restored to Israel, and they shall return to Palestine. And this king shall be potent, the metropolis of whose kingdom shall be Zion ; and his name shall be famous to the uttermost parts of the earth. He shall be *greater than Solomon* ; and with him shall all the nations make peace, and *yield him obedience*, because of his justice, and the miracles that he shall perform. If any one shall rise against him, God shall give him up into his hand, to be destroyed. All the scripture declares his happiness, and the *happiness we shall have by him*. Howbeit, nothing in the nature of things shall be changed ; only Israel shall have the kingdom ; for so our wise men say expressly. There is no difference between these days and the days of the Messiah, but only the *subduing the nations under us*. The Messiah shall die, and his son, and his son's son, shall reign after him ; but his kingdom shall endure long, and men shall live long in those days. But the days of the Messiah are not so much to be desired, that we may have store of corn and wealth, but for the society and conversation of good men." (See Owen on the Hebrews, vol. 1, page 180.) Still are the majority of the Jews tenacious of these two points relative to the Messiah ; that he is *yet to come*, and that his kingdom is to be a *temporal* and a *worldly* kingdom. "Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart." May God hasten the time, when they shall turn to the Lord, and this vail shall be taken away !



## PSALM LXXXVII, 5.

“And of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her.”

The words in the original are, *ISH VE ISH*, signifying literally, *a man and a man*; or, as they have been rendered by some, *the man*, even *the man*. (See Bishop Horne, *in loco*.) According to the last rendering, the words are applicable to the Messiah, who was to be born in Zion, and from whom Zion herself was to receive everlasting salvation and glory. He was to be “*the man*,” by way of eminence; “the first begotten among many brethren; fairer than the children of men; higher than the kings of the earth.” A circumstance giving some weight to this interpretation is, that *ISH* denotes commonly a man of *distinction*; as *ADAM* (the other Hebrew word for man) does a common man merely. The most natural meaning, however, of the Hebrew phrase, seems to be that embraced in the first mentioned translation, viz. ‘a man and a man;’ i. e. men in succession, a long succession of men, including among others, some distinguished men also. The principal design of the Psalmist, in this place, seems to have been, to assure us from the spirit of prophecy, that numerous and yet ever-increasing additions would be made to the church of God in future times. “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.” (Verse 3.)

## PSALM CIX, 7, &amp;c.

“When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few, and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labor. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children,” &c.

Such expressions as these have sometimes proved the occasion of much perplexity to the pious, and of much caviling among the wicked. They have been considered by many, as indicating in David a spirit very unchristian, and indeed very malignant and revengeful. Indeed, if they must be considered as mere *imprecations*, and as expressions of the real *desires* of David’s heart, we all, perhaps, ought to re-



gard them in the light just mentioned. But the important remark to be made relative to these passages is, that the verbs here used are in the *future* tense, and that of course the expressions themselves may very properly be considered as *predictions* only: Thus—"His days shall be few; his children shall be fatherless, and his wife a widow," &c. Further, even if the verbs here used should be understood as if they were in the imperative mood, and not in the future-tense of the indicative, it would not hence certainly follow, that the passages in question ought to be considered as *imprecations*. They might be predictions still, or at most only prophetic denunciations, by virtue of that well known idiom of the Hebrew language, by which the imperative mood is sometimes used for the future tense of the indicative. See, in illustration, Gen. xx, 7, which, translated literally, is, "And he shall pray for thee, and live;" i. e. thou shalt live. Also, xlv, 18—"I will give you the land of Egypt; and eat (i. e. ye shall eat) of the fat of the land." (See, also, in the Hebrew, Gen. xlii, 18: Isa. ix, 3.)

#### PSALM CXXIX, 6.

"Let them be as the grass upon the house tops, which withereth afore it groweth up."

The houses of the Jews, as has been already observed, had flat roofs. (See the comments on Mat. xxiv, 17.) On these was a plaster of terrace. On this some grass grew; but as it had "no deepness of earth," and was exposed to the scorching rays of an almost vertical sun, it soon withered away. Thus transient, the Psalmist tells us, is the prosperity of all such as hate Zion. How impressive the illustration! "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." (1 Pet. i, 25.)

#### PSALM CXXXIX, 21, 22.

"Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? . . . I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies."

The hatred here mentioned by David, as exercised by him towards the enemies of the Lord, was a hatred opposed directly, not to the love of benevolence, but to the love of

*complacency.* (See, as a similar text, Rom. ix, 13.) David hated their characters and conduct; not their persons. While, as a godly man, he could not but disapprove of and detest the former, he wished well to the latter.

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## PROVERBS.

### CHAPTER IX, VERSES 1—4.

“Wisdom . . . hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table; she hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the highest places of the city: Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither,” &c.

The following custom, noticed by Hasselquist in Egypt, and considered by him as very ancient, may serve to illustrate these passages. “I saw (says he) a number of women, who went about inviting people to a banquet. They were about ten or twelve, covered with black veils, as is customary in that country. They were preceded by four eunuchs. After them, and on their right side, were Moors, with their usual walking staves. As they were walking, they all joined in making a noise.” Whence we learn, that the invitation to the banquet or feast was given by a number of *maidens* or *females*; also, that it was not private, as is usual in our country, but public and *loudly proclaimed*. Thus much for the illustration of these verses in their literal sense only. Understood figuratively, and in reference to their moral or spiritual import, how replete with instruction are they! Taken in this view, they remind us of the rich and abundant provision which the God of mercy has made for our famishing souls; of the commission given to his ministers, to invite thereto their fellow sinners universally, not excepting even the simple, and those that want understanding; and of the necessity there is of our forsaking our foolish and wicked ways, in order that we may be either qualified for, or benefitted by that heavenly banquet.

### CHAP. XX, 1.

“Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”

In these days, much is said, and much is done, and much interest is excited in the public mind, in relation to the subject of spirituous liquors. Temperance societies, formed on the plan of entire abstinence from all intoxicating drinks, except when they are plainly needed for medicinal purposes, i. e. either for curing or preventing diseases, have already become very numerous, and are daily increasing in numbers and influence. But these societies meet with much opposition, not only from the intemperate, but sometimes, too, from a quarter whence it was not expected, even from persons who are themselves decidedly temperate. There is evidently a great difference of views in relation to this subject; not so much in regard to absolute or partial *intoxication*, (for all sober-minded people allow that to be wrong, and agree in condemning it), as in regard to the principle of *total abstinence*. Many good people think it not wrong, either in themselves or others, to use spirituous liquors occasionally and moderately, even when they are not the subjects of any particular disease, and when their bodily health is not particularly endangered; while others are inflexible in the resolution to "go for the whole," (as the saying is), and will be contented with nothing short of "touch not, taste not, handle not." Now, amidst this diversity of views, it may be well for us to inquire, "*What saith the scripture?*" what instruction does that give us on this subject, either by way of precept or example? All, who are acquainted with the Bible, know that it speaks of *wine* and *strong drink*, (of the former especially), in numerous passages beside that which stands at the head of this article; and that it frequently makes mention of such liquors as having been in fact used by the Hebrews, and others, in ancient times. In order to give what light I can from the scriptures on this subject, I shall propose and answer these two questions, viz:—What do the scriptures mean by the terms *wine*, *strong drink*, &c.? and, In what light are they considered in the scriptures; and how far did God permit the use of them to his people of old?

1st. What do the scriptures mean by the terms *wine*, *strong drink*, &c.? I inquire, in the first place, what did the Hebrews intend by the term *wine*? Or rather, (to speak

more correctly), what did they intend by *those words* in their language, which are translated *wine* in ours? They had three words, which by our translators are rendered wine, viz. YAYIN, SOBE, and TIROSH. Of these, the two first are, substantially, of the same import, signifying wine in general; the last signifies *new wine*, i. e. wine lately made, and which of course is not yet thoroughly fermented and purified. But what did they *mean* by these terms? What was the nature of that sort of liquor which is called *wine* in our Bibles? I answer, the wine mentioned in scripture was two-fold. The proper wine of the Hebrews, and that which was most used by them, was the simple juice of the grape. For the manufacture of this sort of wine, their country afforded many and peculiar facilities and advantages. Numerous vineyards were planted, and fenced, and fortified, with singular care and industry, and great numbers of people were employed in the cultivation of them. (Isa. v, 1—4: Mat. xxi, 33.) The grapes raised therefrom, when pressed, produced wine of an excellent flavor and quality. But still, it was simple pure wine, without any mixture of foreign ingredients, and without any other power to produce either intoxication, or exhilaration of the animal spirits, except what the mere juice of the grape would give. Now, this sort of wine is what we are commonly to understand by the term *wine*, as it is used in the sacred scriptures. But beside this, there was another sort of wine, or wine prepared in another form, of which mention is repeatedly made by the inspired writers. This was called *mixed wine*, or mingled wine: And this, also, was of two sorts; so far, I mean, as respects the materials of its composition, the materials that were mixed with the wine; for sometimes the wine was mixed with simple water or milk. Hence it is said in Isa. i, 22, “Thy silver is become dross; thy *wine mixed with water*.” And hence the Bridegroom of the church says, in Cant. v, 1:—“I have drunk my *wine with my milk*.” Wine prepared in this manner must have been more harmless, because less inebriating than wine in its pure state; and it appears to have been designed for quenching thirst, and for mere bodily refreshment. But what is commonly meant by *mixed wine* in the scriptures, is wine *made stronger*, and far more intoxicating,



than it was in its natural and unadulterated state ; and this last is the sort of wine that we find mentioned in the following passages of scripture, viz : Prov. xxiii, 29, 30—" Who hath woe ? who hath sorrow ? who hath contentions ? who hath babbling ? who hath wounds without cause ? who hath redness of eyes ? They that tarry long at the wine ; they that go to seek *mixed wine*." Isa. v, 22—" Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength, to *minge strong drink*." This mixed wine was a composition, consisting of the simple wine, or pure juice of the grape, *mixed* with foreign substances, such as stimulating and intoxicating drugs, &c. " It is remarkable, (says Bishop Lowth), that whereas the Greeks and Latins, by *mixed wine*, always understand wine diluted and lowered with water, the Hebrews, on the contrary, *generally* mean by it, wine made stronger and more intoxicating, by the addition of higher and more powerful ingredients, such as honey, spices—myrrh, mandragora, opiates, and other strong drugs. Such were the exhilarating, or rather stupifying ingredients, which Helen mixed in the bowl, together with the wine, for her guests, oppressed with grief, to raise their spirits, the composition of which she had learned in Egypt. Such was the *spiced wine* mentioned in Solomon's Song, viii, 2. And how much the eastern people, to this day, deal in artificial liquors of prodigious strength, the use of wine being forbidden, may be seen in a curious chapter of Kempfer on that subject." So much for the nature of the *wine* mentioned in the holy scriptures. But beside the pure, and the adulterated wine, manufactured and used in Palestine, the Hebrews sometimes indulged themselves in the use of other stimulating, and, at the same time, far more *intoxicating* drinks. In what manner exactly they were prepared, we do not know ; but they were all comprehended under the general appellation SHEKHAR, i. e. *strong drink*. Of these we know but little, except that they were more powerful and intoxicating than the mere wine was ; as, indeed, its very name imports, and as the effects that were produced by it clearly show. (Isa. xxviii, 7.) The way is now prepared to inquire—

2d. In what light are these liquors considered in the scriptures, and how far did God permit the use of them to



his people of old? That this is a question of great practical importance, will be admitted, of course, by all those who believe that the *will of God*, as expressed in his word, is the paramount rule of duty for mankind. If we can ascertain what that will is in respect to this subject, we ought to be satisfied. The question here is not, what was the *practice* of many of the Hebrews in this matter. There were drunkards among them, (Isa. xxviii, 1), as well as among other people. If we now find intemperate men, even among those whose appropriate business it is to occupy the *sacred desk*, it is "no new thing under the sun;" for the same "hath been already of old time," as appears from Isa. xxviii, 7. But the question is, how did *God* view this subject, and how far did *he* allow his people to use the afore-mentioned liquors? This question may be answered, and the point settled at once, so far as respects the pure wine, the simple juice of the grape. Even that might be drank, and sometimes was drank to excess, and to a degree involving much criminality, as we see in the case of Noah, (Gen. ix, 21), and of Nabal, (1 Sam. xxv, 36.) But that the moderate and temperate use of it was lawful and right, there can be no reasonable question. The scriptures never condemn such a use of this sort of wine. But whenever they condemn the use of this sort of wine at all, it is always when it is used to excess, and so as to produce either total or partial intoxication. In the second chapter of John's Gospel, we have an account of Jesus attending a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, and of his there turning the water into wine, expressly for the purpose of supplying the guests with wine on that occasion; which, surely, he would not have done, if the moderate drinking of that liquid had been sinful. Nay, further, wine of this sort, or a small quantity of it, was used in the solemn religious services and sacrifices of the Jews, particularly at the morning and evening sacrifice. (Ex. xxix, 40, 41.) And besides, when the Lord's supper was instituted, our Saviour made use of this sort of wine, this "fruit of the vine," as one of the elements in that holy ordinance. It is impossible to account for the two last mentioned facts in any other way than this, viz: that there was nothing unclean in the sight of God, in the nature of this sort of wine,

in itself, and nothing wrong in the moderate drinking of it. Accordingly, it appears from the tenor of both the Old and the New Testament scriptures, that people did in fact, to a great extent, make use of this sort of wine, without any apprehension that they were doing wrong thereby, except as they might drink it to excess. In a word, so far as the question respects wine of this sort, the point is settled, and there is no room for debate. But *mixed wine*, of the species last mentioned above, i. e. wine *mixed* with stimulating and intoxicating drugs, and which, of course, partook far more of the nature of our distilled spirits, than the pure wine of the Hebrews did, is far from being viewed in the same point of light in the scriptures. They never speak of it with approbation. They give no license, either for the drinking, or for the making of it. In the imagery employed by the sacred writers, this mixed wine is no where used as a symbol of good, or of spiritual blessings, as the pure wine sometimes is. (Isa. lv, 1 : Mat. xxvi, 29.) On the contrary, it is alluded to by the Psalmist, as a symbol of God's holy wrath, and of that punishment which he will inflict on his enemies. "For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is *full of mixture*; and he poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof, (the sediment, the worst and most intoxicating of the whole), all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and shall drink them." (Ps. lxxv, 8.) But in what light do the scriptures view *strong drink*, and do they allow the use of it in any circumstances? I answer, God *did* permit the Jews to use this, as well as wine, in some circumstances. It was allowed as a *medicine*. Accordingly, we read, Prov. xxxi, 6—"Give *strong drink* unto him that is *ready to perish*, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts." There was also another case, in which God permitted the use of strong drink. It is mentioned in the 14th chapter of Deuteronomy. The Jews were there directed to take the tithe of all the productions of their fields, of their corn, of their wine, and of their oil, together with the firstlings of their herds, and of their flocks, and bring it to the place, which the Lord their God should choose to set his name there. But if that place should prove to be so far distant, that they could not carry the tithe there in kind, then

they were allowed to turn that tithe into money, and to go with that to the place, which the Lord should choose. And then it is said, verse 26, "And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for *strong drink*, (Heb. SHEKHAR), or for whatsoever thy soul desireth; and thou shalt there eat before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou and thy household." But the manner in which the scriptures commonly speak of *strong drink*, is that of decided and unqualified disapprobation. (See, as specimens, Prov. xxxi, 4, 5: Isa. v, 11, 22; xxiv, 9; lvi, 12.) It may be added, uniformly do they speak of it in this manner, when they refer to the *habitual* use of it.—Hitherto our investigation has been confined to the Old Testament. If now, we examine the New Testament, we shall find that its decisions relative to this subject are the same, substantially, with those of the Old. The Apostle says to Timothy, in the 5th chapter and 23d verse of his first epistle, "Drink no longer water; but use a little wine for thy *stomach's sake*, and thine *often infirmities*." Here, then, the use of wine is expressly allowed, (as that of strong drink formerly had been, Prov. xxxi, 6), in case of bodily indisposition and infirmity; or, in other words, as a *medicine*. Besides, it does not appear, that the New Testament writers ever forbade absolutely the use of wine, even in *common cases*. Though the apostles condemn all *intemperate* drinking, (Eph. v, 18: 1 Pet. iv, 3); and pronounce all drunkards (continuing such) excluded from the kingdom of heaven, (Gal. v, 21: 1 Cor. vi, 9); yet nowhere do they prohibit the moderate and *temperate* drinking of wine, even in common circumstances. Paul says in Romans xiv, 21, "It is good—neither to eat flesh, nor to *drink wine*, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." But here was a *special case*. The apostle refers in the context to the prejudices of some weak brethren. He declares in verse 14, "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself;" and in verse 20, "All things indeed are pure." But notwithstanding this, if the drinking of wine should prove injurious to the spiritual interests of a christian brother, the law of love required that it should be wholly

abandoned. But this rather implies, that in *ordinary* cases the drinking, i. e. the temperate drinking of wine, was not unlawful. Our Lord Jesus Christ warned his disciples against being *overcharged* with surfeiting and *drunkenness*, &c. (Luke xxi, 34); but no where does he positively and absolutely forbid their using wine. And it is probable, that Jesus himself, and his apostles, did sometimes make use of such wine as was then manufactured in Judea. There seems to be but little reference in the New Testament to those *strong drinks*, which are mentioned in the Old. Perhaps they had, in a great measure, grown out of use, and out of credit. In one case, indeed, the *mixed* or mingled wine is mentioned. It is that of our Saviour, when hanging on the cross. Matthew says, in chapter xxvii, 34, "They gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall." Mark says, in chapter xv, 23, "And they gave him to drink wine, mingled with myrrh." One says, it was *vinegar*, mingled with gall; the other says, it was wine, mingled with myrrh. The truth undoubtedly is, it was *sour* wine, mingled or steeped with *bitter* myrrh. It appears from ancient records, that it was a custom among both Jews and Romans, to administer such a preparation to those whom they had adjudged to capital punishment, just before they suffered, with the view to alleviate their sufferings. But when we read of wine in the New Testament, we are usually to understand by it, "the fruit of the vine;" the same sort of wine that was so abundantly manufactured, and so generally used, in Palestine. It is evident, therefore, that the wine then used was *a very different thing from ours*, and *far less intoxicating*. And hence, we may see how futile is the plea, frequently made in favor of modern wine, as an article of luxury and of daily use, drawn from the fact, that the Jews were permitted to drink wine. The whole strength of such reasoning depends upon a false assumption, viz. that the wine in both cases was the *same*; which, it is certain, was very far from being the case. The truth is, neither distilled spirits, nor modern wines, ought ever to be used in this manner. They should be used as a *medicine only*, in the broad sense of the phrase, i. e. either for curing or preventing bodily disease. Such, I am satisfied, is the conclusion to which a *scriptural* view



of this subject will conduct us. Let the friends of temperance, then, take courage, and not only continue, but increase their efforts. The use which has been, and still is made of ardent spirits, by thousands of people in our land, is not only a great sin in itself; but has doubtless proved, either directly or indirectly, the cause of other sins and miseries, far more than any other vice whatever. Friends of temperance: "Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded." (2 Chron. xv, 7.)

#### CHAP. XXIV, 9.

"The thought of foolishness is sin."

There is a difference between *evil* thoughts, and thoughts of evil. We not only may, but ought to think of our evil ways, and of our doings that have not been good, that we may "loathe ourselves in our own sight, for our iniquities, and for our abominations." (Ezek. xxxvi, 31.) The meaning of the clause before us is, that then are our thoughts of moral foolishness *sin*, when they include an *approbation* of such foolishness or wickedness, and a desire and design to commit it. Can we then say, "*I hate vain thoughts; but thy law do I love?*" (Ps. cxix, 113.)

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### ECCLESIASTES.

#### CHAPTER IX, VERSE 1.

"No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him."

The sense of this scripture is, that no man can know certainly what his moral character in the sight of Heaven is, merely from the outward events which befall him, in the course of divine providence. If he be prospered in worldly things, this is no evidence that he is the object of Jehovah's complacential love. If, on the other hand, he be "vexed with all adversity," he ought not hence, or from this circumstance merely, to conclude that he is certainly in the number of those "whom the Lord abhorreth." In respect to outward events, it may be said in the language of the wise man, "all things come alike to all." But though our moral



characters cannot be learned *from* them, they may be learned *with* them, or by them—by the help of them, and from the manner, the *temper of mind*, with which we meet the smiles and the frowns of Providence. How important, then, is self-examination in this view!

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## ISAIAH.

### CHAPTER XIV, VERSES 3—23.

“And it shall come to pass, in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve; that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath, with a continual stroke; he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet; they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming: It stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak, and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: The worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee, shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble; that did shake kingdoms;

that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave, like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people. The seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned. Prepare slaughter for his children, for the iniquity of their fathers, that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities. For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the LORD. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts."

One object I have had in view in this work has been, to illustrate the genuine beauty and force of several passages of scripture. And I know not how to accomplish this object so well, in reference to the paragraph just quoted, as by quoting the remarks of Bishop Lowth, who is universally allowed to have been a good judge, in respect to such matters as are here presented to our view. His remarks are as follows:—"A chorus of Jews is first introduced, expressing their surprise and astonishment at the sudden downfall of Babylon, and its oppressive tyrant. The harrassed kingdoms, or their rulers, denoted by the fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon, shout with joy, and the whole earth and its productions raise their voice along with them, over the fallen tyrant, and vaunt of their security, now he is no more.—The scene is then changed, (9), and a new set of persons introduced: The regions of the dead are laid open, and Hades is represented as rousing up the shades of the departed monarchs. They rise from their thrones, to meet the king of Babylon, on his arrival, and insult him, on his being reduced to the same abject condition with themselves. This is one of the boldest figures ever attempted in poetry, and is executed with astonishing brevity, perspicuity, and

force. You are to form to yourself an idea of an immense subterraneous vault, a vast gloomy cavern, all around the sides of which there are cells, (in the manner of the Jewish sepulchres), to receive the dead bodies. Here the deceased monarchs lie in a distinguished sort of state, suitable to their former rank, each on his own couch, with his arms beside him, and his chiefs around him. These illustrious shades rise at once from their couches, and advance to the entrance of the cavern, to meet the king of Babylon, and to insult him in his fall.—The Jews now resume the speech, (12); they address the king of Babylon as the morning star, fallen from heaven; the first in splendor and dignity, fallen from his high state. They introduce him as uttering the most extravagant vaunts of his power and ambitious designs in his former glory, which are strongly contrasted in the close with this present low condition.—Immediately follows a different scene, happily imagined, to diversify the same subject. Certain persons are introduced, who light upon the corpse of the king of Babylon, cast out, and lying naked on the bare ground; so disfigured among the common slain, that it is some time before they know him. They accost him with the severest taunts; bitterly reproach him with his destructive ambition, which brought upon him so ignominious an end; and leave him, with execrating his name, race, and posterity.—To complete the whole, God is introduced, (21), declaring the fate of Babylon; the utter extirpation of the royal family, and the total desolation of the city; the deliverance of his people, and the destruction of his enemies; confirming the irreversible decree by the awful sanction of his oath.—The images of this ode are so various, so numerous, and so sublime; expressed with such force, in such elevated words, figures, and sentences, that it is impossible to conceive any thing of the kind more perfect. We hear the Jews, the cedars of Lebanon, the king of Babylon, the ghosts of departed monarchs, and those who find the king's corpse, and even God himself, speaking; and we behold each of them acting his respective part, as it were in some well-cast drama. The persons are numerous, and not confused; bold, but not extravagant. A noble, sublime, and truly divine spirit, glows in every sentence; nothing can be

found deficient ; nothing redundant.—In a word, for beauty of disposition, strength of colouring, greatness of sentiment, brevity, perspicuity, and force of expression, this ode of Isaiah stands among all the monuments of antiquity unrivalled.”

#### CHAP. XIX, 1.

“Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt ; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.”

From what follows in this chapter, it appears, that this passage may have some reference to those invasions, and to the effects of those terrible invasions, on Egypt, which were afterward made by Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Cambyses, and Alexander, in succession. Bishop Lowth thinks it may refer to them all. But this prediction is applicable to, and received a still more literal and signal fulfilment, on another occasion. It should be remembered that the Egyptians were very superstitious, and worshipped numerous *idols*. Among the rest, two were universally adored. These were Osiris and Isis, which are supposed to have been the sun and the moon. But beside these, they worshipped a great number of beasts ; such as the ox, dog, wolf, hawk, crocodile, stork, cat, &c. ; and ascribed divinity even to the pulse and roots in their gardens. Of all the brute animals, to which the Egyptians paid religious adoration, the bull Apis was the most famous, and the most devoutly worshipped. Magnificent temples were erected to him, and when he died, Egypt went into a general mourning. The funeral parade at the burial of this animal cost eleven thousand pounds sterling. These are the facts, as stated in Rollin's ancient history. Now, both Eusebius and Athanasius relate, that when Joseph and Mary, with the child Jesus, fled into Egypt, (Mat. ii, 24), and took up their abode in Hermopolis, where was the temple of Serapis ; and when they three had gone into that temple, immediately their *great* idol, and the *dii minores*, i. e. the smaller deities of the temple, fell prostrate before them. (See Burder's Customs, p. 181.) Thus their idols were *moved at the presence of the Lord Je-*



sus. And to this remarkable event this passage may more immediately refer.

CHAP. XLV, 1—7.

“Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him ; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates ; and the gates shall not be shut : I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight : I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron ; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel, mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name : I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else ; there is no God besides me : I girded thee, though thou hast not known me : That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me : I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness : I make peace, and create evil : I, the Lord, do all these things.”

It is for the sake of this last verse, chiefly, that I have introduced this whole paragraph. But as the preceding verses relative to Cyrus, have in them something very remarkable ; as an illustration of them cannot fail of being interesting to the reader, and may at the same time prepare the way for the explanation of this seventh verse ; I shall in the first place devote some time and labor to them. Cyrus, the personage here addressed, and called by name, was the son of Cambyses, king of Persia, and of Mandana, daughter of Astyages, king of Media. Though, for a heathen, remarkably humane and amiable in his disposition, he was at the same time formidable in arms, and almost always successful in his military expeditions. In the early part of his life, he signalised himself, by compelling Armenia to pay to Media her promised, but afterwards refused tribute ; by taking Sardis, capital of Lydia ; and by routing and overthrowing, with an army of one hundred and ninety-six thousand men, the army of Cræsus, consisting of four hundred and twenty thousand. But his most glorious exploit was still to be



achieved. In the counsels of Heaven it was ordained that he should be the instrument of carrying desolation into the very heart of that nation, by whom the chosen people of God had been so constantly hated, and so frequently distressed. And He who "calleth things that be not, as though they were," here calleth upon him by name, nearly two hundred years before he was born, and commissioneth him, as his anointed one, to execute the purposes of his indignation against Babylon. And here let us pause for a moment, and reflect how improbable, in a human view, it was, that "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency," (chap. xiii, 9), could ever be taken by any human stratagem or power! According to Rollin, this city had been of very long standing; for it was founded by Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah, two thousand six hundred and forty years before Christ. By the daily influx of the treasures of the east through the river Euphrates, which ran under its walls, and by the continual increase of inhabitants, it had become immensely rich and populous. It was surrounded by a wall three hundred and fifty feet high, and eighty-seven feet in width. This wall inclosed the city in the form of an exact square; and each side of the square was fifteen miles in length. On each of these sides were twenty-five brazen gates. Hence the meaning of the expressions, "opening before him (Cyrus) the two-leaved gates, and breaking in pieces the gates of brass." In a word, this city had become, as it were, the metropolis of the world, and seemed to bid defiance to any power short of omnipotence. But before Cyrus, whose right hand the Lord had holden, to subdue nations before him, this great mountain was soon to be made a plain. However formidable and invincible it was in a human view, Herodotus and Xenophon, two authentic historians, inform us of its capture, and of the means by which it was accomplished. Their relation is to this amount:—Cyrus, in view of the city, despaired of taking it by siege or storm, and resolved to make the attempt by stratagem. Accordingly, on a certain night, when king Belshazzar with his lords was holding a great feast, he diverted the course of the river Euphrates into a channel, which had been previously cut by the kings of Babylon, to

receive its waters in times of inundation. He then immediately marched up with his army, on the dry bed of the old channel, under the walls, and thus became master of the city at once, and without difficulty. These same historians further inform us, that after Cyrus and his army had actually gotten into the dry bed of the river, they might have been taken there as in a net, if the brazen gates, which conducted from the streets to the river, had not that night been providentially left open. But in consequence of revelling and intoxication, the infatuated people had forgotten or neglected to shut them. The unexpected appearance of the Persian army in their capital, filled the minds of the Babylonians with alarm and terror, and immediately excited such a tumult, that the gates of the royal palace were by the king's order opened, to inquire into the cause of the great disturbance: And thus, by a wonderful management of Providence, was the way immediately prepared for Cyrus to take Belshazzar himself, and all his lords, prisoners; which he accordingly did. The same night was Belshazzar put to death. (Dan. v, 30.) With what wonderful precision, therefore, was the prediction fulfilled, "I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut." No less precise and wonderful was the prediction in verse 3d, viz: "I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places." For the before-mentioned historians affirm, that the treasures which Cyrus found in Babylon, and in Sardis, amounted to one hundred and twenty-six millions two hundred and twenty-four thousand pounds, of our money. But with all the good properties which Xenophon, his biographer, ascribes to this prince, he was ignorant, hitherto, of the true character of that God, by whose almighty power his right hand had been holden, and whose purposes he had been accomplishing, in his enterprises and conquests. The words in verses 4th and 5th, "Thou hast not known me," necessitate the unwelcome conviction, that this same Cyrus was, during the time of his victorious career, a stranger to the God of Israel. Jupiter had hitherto been the god, to whom he looked for protection: And hence, when he was going to fight Cræsus, hearing a clap of thunder on the right, he

cried out, "Sovereign Jupiter, we follow thee." But from verse 3, "And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, *that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel,*" it seems that the Lord's design, in what he was to do for him, and by him, was to bring him ultimately to the knowledge of himself. And that Cyrus did afterwards become acquainted, in some measure, with the God of Israel, is evident from his proclamation for the return of the Jews, which is recorded in the 1st chapter of Ezra. See his acknowledgment in verse 3, "*He is the God.*"—In view of the preceding remarks, we are now the better prepared to understand what is meant by the 7th verse, viz: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I, the Lord, do all these things." It must be remembered, that Cyrus himself was a Persian. The doctrine of the Magi, who were the moral and religious instructors of the Persians, was, that there were two co-eternal and supreme beings; one, the author of all good; the other, the author of all evil. The terms light, darkness, peace, evil, are generic, and very comprehensive; denoting moral good, and natural good, moral evil, and natural evil; denoting, in a word, good and evil of all kinds. The truth of this remark might be shown at large, by a reference to numerous passages of scripture, where these terms are used; and all who have read the sacred volume with any due degree of care and attention, know it to be a fact. Now, the direct and principal design of this declaration of Jehovah to Cyrus, appears to have been, to *refute* the above mentioned doctrine; a doctrine, in the belief of which that prince had been educated; and to show, in opposition to the prevailing sentiment of his countrymen, that there was only *one* supreme Being, (and evidently, in strict propriety, only one can be *supreme*); that light and darkness were alike formed, and peace and evil alike created, by Him *alone*. This truth had been, in substance, asserted before, in verses 5th and 6th, viz: "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else." But the sen-

timent is here repeated in another form, and with some amplification. When, however, it is added, "I, the Lord, *do* all these things," we are not to suppose that he *doth* evil in the usual sense of the terms. For, whatever may be the agency of God, in either natural or moral evil, it cannot arise from any *evil design*; nor can it ever be exercised in any manner that is inconsistent with perfect benevolence, and spotless moral purity. "Far be it from God, (says Elihu), that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity." Doing wickedness, and committing iniquity, signify the same thing; but to impute either of these to our Creator, in the usual sense of such expressions, is evident blasphemy. And here I cannot but remark, that great caution is necessary for ministers, whenever they discuss the subject of divine agency in sin. The first of all inquiries should be, what idea did the *Jews* attach to such phraseology? If we can only ascertain this, we may know what *God* meant by it; for, doubtless, in the communications he made to that people, he used language in the sense in which they understood it. The general import of this declaration of Jehovah to Cyrus is, that there are not *two* supreme beings, as Cyrus and his countrymen had been taught, and had believed; but that He *only* hath supreme control, and that all events are directed and determined by his providential agency.

#### CHAP. LIII, 3.

—"And we hid, as it were, our faces from him;" or thus, "he hid, as it were, his face from us."

In the Hebrew, the word translated "we hid," is what we should call in English, an active participle of the singular number; and the pronoun, or final word, of the clause, is, in that language, in the first person plural. Accordingly, Bishop Lowth, who, with all the best commentators, refers the clause to Christ, translates it thus: "As one that hideth his face from us." The meaning of the declaration, that Jesus Christ, in his last sufferings, hid, or rather of the prediction, that he would then hide his face from us, must be, either that he then had or would have his *human* face, as it were, covered, and thus *hid*, in token of his bearing our



guilt, (according to the prescriptions of the law); or that he then veiled, or would veil, conceal, hide his *divine glory* from us. Either of these versions is admissible; and each conveys a most important truth.

### VERSE 8.

“He was taken from prison, and from judgment.”

If the word *prison* must be retained in our version, some other meaning than the common one should, evidently, be annexed to it. For in what *prison* was our Lord ever confined, and from what one was he ever taken? We read, that the apostles were imprisoned, (Acts v, 18), and that Peter was put in prison, (Acts xii, 4); but no where in the history of Jesus Christ, as written by the evangelists, do we read of any such thing respecting him. The Hebrew word rendered “from prison,” is a noun derived from a verb, which signifies, to restrain, to detain, to rule. As here used, it must denote civil magistracy, i. e. Pilate’s tribunal or court, before which Jesus was tried, and by which judgment or sentence of death was passed upon him. In that sort of prison, in Pilate’s “judgment-hall,” Jesus was indeed confined, or rather detained a short time, possibly a few hours; and thence was he “taken,” and by virtue of Pilate’s judgment, or judicial sentence, led to execution. Bishop Lowth, in his new translation of Isaiah, renders the passage thus:—“By an oppressive judgment, he was taken off.”

## JEREMIAH.

### CHAPTER III, VERSE 2.

“In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness.”

For the illustration of this passage, the following remarks from Sir J. Chardin, relative to the modern practice of the Arabs, are in point, viz:—“Thus the Arabs wait for caravans with the most violent avidity, looking about them on all sides, raising themselves up on their horses, running here and there, to see if they cannot perceive any smoke or dust, or tracks on the ground, or any other marks of people



passing along." What a striking coincidence does the above quotation show, between the ancient and modern practices of the descendants of Ishmael! Always has their hand been against every man; and, consequently, every man's hand has been against them.

#### CHAP. XX, 7.

"O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived."

Witsius and Henry render it thus, 'Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded.' **PATAH**, the Hebrew word here used, signifies in Chaldee, to enlarge; but in Hebrew, to persuade, to allure, to entice, whether to good or evil. Scott's interpretation is to this purpose; that the Lord, by his promises, (chap. i, 8, 18), had allured him to undertake the prophetic office; but now he was disappointed, in regard to the credit and comfort he had expected. And from the connection, (see from verse 7 to 11), it seems that such was the sentiment which the prophet intended to express. At any rate, this text is of no force to support the doctrine, into the service of which it has sometimes been pressed, viz. that there is a direct positive agency of God in sin. It does not relate at all to that doctrine, but simply to the prophet's undertaking his appropriate office, and to the events which followed.

### HOSEA.

#### CHAPTER V, VERSE 11.

"Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment."

Repeatedly has this passage been proposed to the author for explanation. At first, indeed, it seems attended with some difficulty. The proposition, that Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment, we easily understand. We know what is meant by the sentence: Nor do those who have examined the history of the ten tribes, experience any more difficulty in seeing the *truth*, than they do in understanding the *meaning*, of this proposition. All the difficulty lies in seeing how they should be thus oppressed, and bro-

ken, and afflicted, for the *reason* here specified, viz. because they *willingly walked after the commandment*. But by the commandment here, we are not to understand the commandment of God; as though that people had been so sorely chastised, because they had walked, willingly walked, after *his* commandments. But what is meant by the commandment here, is the commandment of Jeroboam, to worship his idols, his calves in Bethel and Dan. Because they willingly obeyed the command of him, who sought to drive them from following the Lord, willingly followed after and worshipped his senseless idols; therefore, Jehovah punished them, in permitting them to be sorely oppressed by their own rulers, and in exposing them to the attacks and ravages of hostile invaders.

## JONAH.

### CHAPTER III, VERSE 10.

“And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.”

Many readers have experienced difficulty from this text, and from a few other similar ones in the Bible, in which God is said to have *repented*. But very few, perhaps none, are so absurd in their views, as to suppose that God ever repents, or is morally capable of repenting altogether, in the same sense in which *sinner*s, *as such*, are required to repent. Repentance, as existing in them, is connected with “godly sorrow” for sin, for *personal* sin, for *their own* sin; with that godly sorrow which worketh a salutary reformation, and which includes self-condemnation, (Job xlii, 6: Lev. xxvi, 41: Ezek. xx, 43), and fixed resolutions for future amendment. (2 Cor. vii, 11.) But of such a repentance as this God must be absolutely incapable, because he has no sin to repent of, or to be sorry for; and because, even if he had, any thing like proper *sorrow*, either in view of what he has ever been, or has ever done, would be absolutely incompatible with that infinite *blessedness*, which belongs to him. And there are but very few, if any, who suppose that re-

pentance of this kind is intended, in those places where God is said to repent. The difficulty in question is not owing to any such supposition as this. But the difficulty, with many persons, arises from another source. If God ever repents, say they, then he must, for aught we can see, be weak, unstable, and mutable, and must actually *change* in his views, feelings, and purposes. But this would be inconsistent with numerous other passages of scripture, which declare the contrary; and, also, with that absolute and infinite *perfection* which both reason and revelation attribute to him. They seem to understand repentance, when ascribed to God, as denoting some change in his feelings, and views, and purposes, in some such sense as the term does, when applied to men. Hence arises the difficulty they feel in relation to this subject; for they have been accustomed to view God in a very different light; even as that Being with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (James i, 17.) At the same time they allow, that *something* must be meant by such passages. But, 'What *do* they mean?' is the question that has frequently been proposed to myself, and, undoubtedly, to many other ministers also.—In reply, it may be observed in general, such passages are to be interpreted not literally, but *figuratively*. Much that is said in scripture about God, is clearly to be understood in the figurative sense only. This is certainly true of the following passages:—Prov. xv, 3—"The *eyes* of the LORD are in every place." (See also Deut. xi, 12: 1 Sam. xxvi, 24: Amos ix, 8.) James v, 4—"The cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the *ears* of the Lord of Sabaoth." (See also Num. xi, 18: 2 Sam. xxii, 7: Ps. xxxiv, 15.) Isa. xlv, 12—"I, even my *hands*, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." (See also verse 11; xlix, 16: Job x, 3.) Psalm xviii, 9—"He bowed the heavens, also, and came down; and darkness was under his *feet*." (See also Isa. lx, 13: Nahum i, 3: Ex. xxiv, 10.) Now, as we are elsewhere assured, that "God is a spirit," (John iv, 24); and as "a spirit hath not flesh and bones," nor any bodily properties, but is purely an immaterial substance, we may be certain that the above texts, applied as they are to Jehovah, must be understood

*figuratively*, and not in the literal sense. The *eyes* of a *man* are indicative of his intelligence, or at least of his capacity for intelligence, far more than any other part of the human frame. And the phrase, *eyes of a man*, or what is equivalent thereto, is sometimes used to denote his actual, intellectual discernment, not only in common practice, but in the Bible too. (Eph. i, 18.) And hence, in gracious accommodation to our weakness, "the eyes of the Lord," is a phrase used in the scriptures, to denote *his* intelligence. It is remarkable, also, that this expression, as used in the scriptures, is frequently joined with other such qualifying expressions, as clearly show, that the eyes of the Lord are very different from, and infinitely superior to, the eyes of men, and of all creatures—such expressions as are, moreover, strong proofs of what they would seem, at first view, to contradict, viz. his absolute spirituality. For if Jehovah has eyes, they are eyes which "run to and fro through all the earth," (2 Chron. xvi, 9); which "are in every place," (Proverbs xv, 3); and to which "all things are naked and open," (Heb. iv, 13.) Ears are those bodily organs, with which we hear. Now, how could that most comfortable truth, that God attends to the groans, the prayers, and supplications of his people, be made known to us in his word, except by such metaphorical language, as is taken from, or has some respect to that organ? Hence, his thus attending to us, is called *hearing* us. If God speaks to us at all, and speaks to us to any good purpose, as it respects ourselves, he must adapt himself to our natures, organised as they are. How can God assure us, that he is willing to attend to our supplications, more strongly than by telling us that he hath an *ear* to hear, and that "his ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear?"—The *hands*, the *right hand*, and more especially the *arm*, and the *right arm* of a *man*, are the principal means by which he accomplishes his outward operations; and these terms, we know, are frequently used by men in the figurative sense, as denoting skill, physical strength, power. In the same sense are they frequently used in the Bible, when applied to God; as in the following passages:—Joshua iv, 24—"That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty." Job xii, 9—"Who know-



eth not, in all these things, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?" Isa. lix, 1—"Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save." Ps. cxviii, 15, 16—"The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." lxxxix, 13—"Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thy hand; and high is thy right hand." In the same figurative sense, we are to understand those scriptures, which speak of God as flying, (Ps. xviii, 10), as sleeping, (Ps. xliv, 23), and as awaking, (Ps. lxxviii, 65.) And in the same sense, also, must we understand those passages, which ascribe *repentance* unto God. If any should ask, how do we know that these passages are to be understood in the figurative sense? the answer is, we know it from the very nature of the subject. It is a maxim in the interpretation of scripture, that passages are to be understood literally, unless the nature of the subject, or other passages, require a different interpretation; but if so, then they are to be understood differently. Now, both these reasons exist in the case before us. The doctrine of the Bible is, that God is not spiritual only, but "*a spirit*," a pure spirit. (John iv, 24.) Of course, he has no bodily properties. And particularly, so far as respects the subject now more immediately before us, numerous other passages require, that the term *repenting*, when applied to God, should be understood in the figurative sense only. The Bible expressly and frequently declares, that God is unchangeable. He is unchangeable in his *nature*. Ps. cii, 25—27—"Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish; but thou shalt endure. Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou *art* the same." Here the *nature* of God is declared to be immutable; and its immutability is finely represented, by contrasting it to the mutability and perishing nature of this visible universe.—God is unchangeable in his *purposes* also. The scriptures declare, that he is in *one mind*, and none can turn him; that his *counsel stands for ever*, the thoughts of his heart to all generations; that he declares the end from the beginning, and from an-



cient times, the things that are not yet done ; saying, *my counsel shall stand*, and I will do all my pleasure. (Job xxiii, 13 : Ps. xxxiii, 11 : Isa. xlv, 10.) And it is in reference to these, his fixed purposes, that it is repeatedly said in scripture, God doth not repent, and will not repent. (Num. xxiii, 19 : 1 Sam. xv, 29 : Jer. iv, 28 : Ezek. xxiv, 14.) Thus evident it is from the scriptures, that God is unchangeable, both in his nature, and in his purposes. It is certain, therefore, that those passages of scripture, which ascribe repentance to God, are not to be understood in any sense inconsistent with his absolute immutability, in both these respects. And, of course, so far as such passages indicate any change at all in relation to God, it must be a change *external*, and not a change *internal* ; a change in the outward dispensations of his providence ; not a change, either in his nature, or in the purposes of his mind. If changes in providence must be considered as so many changes in God, then God is continually changing ; because these outward providences are continually changing, in one respect or another. But the truth is, these changes in providence, in outward events, are very far from being changes in God ; nor are the former any evidence of the latter. God's outward, providential dealings with the Israelites in the wilderness, frequently varied, as their conduct varied, and as they were obedient, or disobedient. But his *purpose* respecting them remained *the same*. It was to bring them, or at least their children, into the land of Canaan. In the 89th Psalm, God declares, that his treatment of the seed of David would vary, according to circumstances ; that, in a word, it would be according to their own conduct. If, particularly, David's children should forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments ; if they should break his statutes, and keep not his commandments ; then He would visit their iniquity with the rod, and their transgressions with stripes. But his purpose remained the same, in regard both to David and his seed. " Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from *him*, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." (Verse 33.) And again, " His *seed* shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun, before me." (Verse 36.) God treats his children, as the faithful physician treats his patients. The phy-

sician varies his treatment of his patient, according to the varying symptoms of the disease ; but all this does not imply any change in the physician's *mind*. His purpose uniformly is, to heal the patient, if possible. It is certain, therefore, that those passages which ascribe repentance to God, so far as they exhibit any change at all in relation to him, denote a change in his outward conduct, in his providential dispensations ; not in his mind. And it is evident, that some of those passages do denote such an outward change ; those particularly, which relate to cases where divine threats or promises had been previously given. Of the former, the case of the Ninevites is an example. The threat had been given, " Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." (iii, 4.) We must suppose that this threat, though expressed with apparent absoluteness, was conditional, so far as the divine purpose relative to its execution was concerned. This we must suppose from what is said in verse 10—" And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way ; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them ; and he did it not." Now this shows, that when God gave the threat, he meant to treat them according to their conduct ; that, in a word, he would certainly destroy them, if they should not turn from their evil ways, and would spare them, if they should thus turn. God's providence and his purpose must always agree. In other words, he always meant to do just as he does, and always does as he meant to do. The truth of this cannot be reasonably questioned by any man. Now, God did in fact spare the Ninevites, when they repented ; and, therefore, when he gave the threat, he meant so to do, should this condition be complied with by them, as he undoubtedly foresaw it would be. It seems, moreover, that the Ninevites themselves understood the threat as conditional. It is evident they had some hope of being spared, in case of reformation. This appears both from what they did, and from what they said. They observed a general fast on that occasion, and cried mightily unto God, saying, " Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ?" In short, the meaning of the threat, so far as its execution was concerned, must have been the same with that

of Christ—"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii, 3.) It is in this way, that divine threats against bodies of men are to be understood, as we learn from Jeremiah xviii, 7, 8—"At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." The same conditionality belongs to the promises, also, which are made to such a nation or kingdom, as we learn from the two verses next succeeding. The same thing is true, also, of divine threats against individuals. Of this we have a specimen in Ezekiel xxxiii, 14—"When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die." Here the threat is absolute, as to its form. But that there was a condition in it, is evident from what immediately follows, viz: "If he turn from his wicked way, and do that which is lawful and right, . . . he shall surely live; he shall not die." But when divine promises or threats are said to be conditional, this must always be understood of such divine promises or threats, as were not accompanied and confirmed by an *oath*; for in such a case, God is never said to repent. When God has thus *sworn* by himself, his word, which had gone out in righteousness, *would not return*. But no oath is mentioned, as accompanying the threat against the Ninevites, and we may be sure there was none. Says Bishop Lowth, "Whenever repentance is ascribed to God, it must be meant only of a change with respect to the outward administrations of his providence, and his dealing with men otherwise than he did before." This is true with one qualification, viz. when the repentance in question *has immediate respect to some divine threat or promise*, previously given; for in some places, where repentance is ascribed to God, it does not appear that any divine threat or promise was particularly in view. The above remark is, however, strictly true, in reference to the case now before us, that of the Ninevites. When "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil" that he had threatened, and he did it not. He no longer threatened them so terribly as he had done, and changed his providential dispensations towards them, his outward treatment of

them, and made it very different from what it otherwise would have been, i. e. in case they had not repented; and thus he acted as men do when they really change their minds, though there was no change in his mind.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS.

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How far the main object of the present work, as stated in the title page, and in the preface, has been accomplished, and with what success—i. e. how far the many passages commented upon have been explained correctly, and how far they have been explained in a manner adapted to the understandings of those readers, for whom chiefly this work has been designed—must now be left to their judgment, and to that of an enlightened christian community. In some cases, it will be seen, that the *results* of my investigations, merely, have been given, without stating particularly that process of thought which has led to those results. My apology for not pursuing a different course in these cases is:—1st. It did not appear to me to be very necessary for common readers; and, 2d. The designed limits of the present work would not allow of it. But there is one inquiry, relative to this subject, which has frequently arisen in the minds of many, and to which it seems proper to pay some attention, in this place. The inquiry is this, viz: *Why is it that God has left in his word so many things that are hard to be understood, or to be fully comprehended by the mind of man?* If the Bible be indeed the word of God, and designed for our benefit, why is not every thing in it made plain, so that its true import may be discerned at once? In reply to this inquiry, I would offer a few remarks, with the hope, that they may not only afford some satisfaction in respect to the point embraced in the inquiry itself; but may also give to this whole subject more of a *practical* character and tendency, than could have been reasonably expected in the body of the work itself.

I. One reason of this may be supposed to lie in the *necessity of the case*. If God should give to us any revelation at all, we might well suppose it would contain some account



of *himself*; of his own being, perfections, and government; of other intelligent beings beside mankind, and superior to them, provided such beings exist; of another state of being, to succeed the present one, and of its employments, its duration, its enjoyments, or miseries, provided these things are realities. But these are subjects, the full comprehension of which must necessarily be impossible to the limited mind of man. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do; deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." (Job xi, 7.) We know but very little even of those worldly objects and things, which we profess to understand, and with which we are most familiar. But "that which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?" (Eccl. vii, 24.) The difficulty of our comprehending fully such subjects, must appear peculiarly great, when, in connection with the nature of the subjects themselves, we consider the weakness of the human mind, and the additional difficulty which it always experiences in reference to things of a *spiritual* and *holy* nature, arising from *sin*. For in regard to these things, "the understanding is darkened, by reason of the blindness of the heart." (Eph. iv, 18.) In the very nature and necessity of the case, therefore, we may see one reason for the fact now under consideration.

II. Another reason for it may be, that God might thereby *make trial of men's tempers and dispositions*. We know that this is the case in regard to providence. Many of God's providential dispensations are to us utterly mysterious, and hard to be understood, in any way consistent with our previous and present views of the divine character. His judgments are a great deep. We do not, and cannot see, why many events and things should be as they are. The difficulty occasioned even to good men, men of faith, by some of the divine providential dispensations in this world, and the great perplexity of mind which they sometimes feel, in view of them, are represented by Asaph, in the 73d Psalm. Now there *are*, doubtless, reasons for all this; and reasons, too, which to the Infinite Mind are sufficient for the divine

government being as it is, and for events taking place as they do; and which would be satisfactory to us, were the eyes of our understanding sufficiently enlightened. And even we ourselves are not left in total ignorance, in relation to this matter. For though we know but little about these reasons, we may, at least, be sure of this, viz: That one object God has in view, in such mysterious providential dispensations, is, to *try the tempers and dispositions* of mankind, and especially the *faith* of his own children. This is expressly declared to have been the object he had in view, in his mysterious dealings with the Israelites. "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years, in the wilderness, to *humble thee*, and to *prove thee*, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." (Deut. viii, 2, 16.) Of the same nature, as we may well suppose, was God's design, in permitting difficulty to attend some parts of his word. It would prove a *test*, by which the tempers and characters of men might be tried. It would hence be seen, whether they would throw aside the scriptures entirely, and have no more concern with them, on account of some difficulties which attend them; even as some persons, who have professedly and apparently set out in the way to heaven, have finally relinquished that way, on account of the trials and *practical* difficulties they met with in their course. Hereby, also, they would be tried, in respect to the *searching* of the scriptures; whether they would search them or not, as they are required to do. In the same proportion as there are difficulties attending the Bible, is self-denying diligence, in the use of the appointed means, necessary for the understanding of it. That such diligence on our part is a duty, (a duty, which, like other duties required of us, would eventually bring its own rich reward), is evident from several passages of scripture. (See Prov. ii, 1—6: John v, 39: 2 Tim. iii, 15.) But the point to be ascertained is, whether we will *perform* this duty; or whether, in view of some obstructions in our path, arising partly from the nature of the subject itself, and partly from the nature of our mental and moral constitution, we will "cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despise the word of the Holy One of Israel."

(Isa. v, 24.) The difficulties attending some parts of the word of God are a weighty reason, not only for personal diligence in study and meditation, and comparing scripture with scripture, &c.; but also for earnest *prayer* to the Father of Lights, for special *divine* illumination, and for the aids of that Holy Spirit, which searcheth all things, even the *deep* things of God. (1 Cor. ii, 10.) These aids of the Holy Spirit, we are in the holy scriptures repeatedly commanded, to ask of God; and we are at the same time assured, that he is willing to grant them freely to all who humbly ask for them. (Luke xi, 13: James i, 5.) Now, the point to be ascertained is, whether *we will thus ask* for that divine illumination, that Holy Spirit, whose peculiar official work it is to "help our infirmities," in this case, as well as in others; and without whose blessed teaching and influence, we, indeed, "know nothing yet as we ought to know," (1 Cor. viii, 2), of any part of the word of God. This, viz. the teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit, and earnest prayer for such teaching and influence, on the part of all those who would rightly interpret or understand the scriptures, is a matter of the greatest practical importance. "In thy light shall we see light." (Ps. xxxvi, 9.) The difficulties attending some points in revealed religion have driven many men to a critical and laborious investigation of the scriptures. But in too many instances, this same investigation, though commendable for the ardor and untiring diligence with which it was prosecuted, has been radically defective, and consequently has failed of issuing in those results, which could have been wished for; and has even led, in some cases, to very dangerous errors, in consequence of these men's depending too little on the teachings of the Holy Spirit, and too much on the mere powers of the human mind. What a striking exemplification of this has been afforded within these twenty years past, by the literati of the new school in Germany! Now, one reason why God has left in his word things of difficult comprehension, may be, not only to *try* and *prove* us thereby, whether we will be so much the more diligent in *searching* the scriptures, (as surely for this same reason we ought to be); but, also, to ascertain whether we will search them with the *right spirit*, with

a humble, docile, and prayerful frame of mind, sensible of our own ignorance, and of our utter inability, by reason of sin, to understand aright the things of the Spirit of God, without the teachings of that Spirit, (1 Cor. ii, 11, 14); or whether, on the other hand, with a proud conceit of the sufficiency of human reason for this purpose, we will bewilder ourselves and others in useless speculations, and reject whatever we find in the scriptures, that we cannot comprehend, “vainly puffed up by our fleshly mind.” In supposing this to have been one reason for the fact in question, we only suppose an analogy between what God has *said*, and what he has *done*; between his word, and his providential dispensations.

III. Another reason why God has left in his word some things hard to be understood, may be, that thus there might be in the scriptures something *adapted to every capacity*; and suited to gratify the various innocent tastes of men, (when those tastes were under proper regulations); and to call into exercise their various peculiar talents. There are among Christians, the strong and the weak. The truth of this, as a matter of fact, is not only declared in scripture, (Rom. xv, 1), but is sufficiently evident from daily observation. Now, both these sorts of persons need their appropriate nourishment. The one have need of milk; the other, in addition to that nourishment which is necessary for Christians in common, have need, sometimes, of strong meat also. This the apostle teaches, in Heb. v, 12—14; where, speaking of the latter particularly, he says, “Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” What the apostle meant by strong meat, in this place, was, things not easily comprehended, in distinction from the plainer and more simple truths of the gospel—things comparatively hard to be understood. This must be evident to an attentive, candid mind, not only from the connection in which the passage, containing this expression, is found, (where the character of *Melchisedek* is the subject referred to); but also from the metaphor itself, that is here used, viz. “*strong meat*,” which is a thing of difficult digestion, and which cannot be properly digested at all,



except by those whose digestive organs have become strengthened by age and use. Now, God hath, in merciful adaptation to the mental character, and to the spiritual state of his children, provided for each one of them his own proper portion. For the weak, who are encompassed with many infirmities; who are "unskilful in the word of righteousness," and who are mere babes in the divine life, milk is provided, even "the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." (1 Pet. ii, 2.) But for those who are "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," and who are advanced to much higher attainments in their christian course, strong meat is provided. Thus provision is made for "every one according to his several ability."—It is remarkable, also, that there is, among Christians, a great diversity of *taste* and of *talent*. Each one has his own peculiar genius, and cast of mind; so that it is difficult to determine which we ought most to admire—the *wisdom* of God, in bestowing such "diversities of gifts," all which are needed, (1 Cor. xii), and may, by the divine blessing, be made greatly beneficial to different classes of persons, "to the use of edifying;" or—the *goodness* of God, as manifested in providing such a *variety* of matter in his word, that every taste may be gratified to a reasonable extent, and that no talent may remain either unoccupied, or useless.

IV. Another reason why God has left so many difficulties in his word, may be, that he might show thereby the importance and the necessity of good *human teaching*, and of a *well educated ministry*. These things, we know, are undervalued by many. The reasons of it are different in different individuals. In some, the reason why man's teaching is so much undervalued, seems to be mere *self-conceit*; a thinking of themselves more highly than they ought to think, and more highly than they would think, had they more of genuine self-knowledge. Some seem to think they know enough now; or, if they do not, that they are capable of knowing all they need to know about these things, of themselves, and without help from others. In others, the reason seems to be, the *erroneous views they have about the teachings of the Holy Ghost*; as though such teachings were ever designed to supersede divine institutions and the use of



means, or were ever to be expected without the use of such means as are within our reach. But however the fact in question may be accounted for, its existence, to some extent, is undeniable. But the judgment of God, which is in all cases according to truth, is very different from the judgment of these men, in respect to this matter. This appears from what he has *said*, and from what he has *done*. He has said, "How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear, without a *preacher*?" (Rom. x, 14.) When a people are deprived of, or are not favored with good human teachers, and are thus as sheep scattered abroad, having no shepherd, their state is viewed by Christ as being most deplorable. (Mat. ix, 36—38.) Among the precious blessings which God promises to his people, is that of such teachers. "And I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." (Jer. iii, 15.) That God views *human* teaching and instruction as very important; or rather, that he considers it very important that *his own* truth should be explained, his precepts enforced, and his ordinances and institutions maintained, by human instrumentality, appears also from what he has *done*. Under the Mosaic economy, the tribe of Levi, more especially the family of Aaron, in all their successive generations, were, by divine appointment, assigned to this very business; and, that they might not be encumbered with worldly concerns, to the neglect of their appropriate work, provision was made, by divine direction, for their worldly maintenance and support by the people. To their priests, their human teachers, it was made the duty of the people to repair for instruction, in the law of God. (Mal. ii, 7.) And beside them, there was an extraordinary class of men, called *seers* or *prophets*, who were raised up by God for the same general purpose. "The office of a prophet was not confined to the prediction of future events. It was their province to *instruct* the people, and they *interpreted* the law of God. Hence the words *prophet* and *prophecy* are, in many passages of the scriptures, synonymous with interpreter or teacher, and interpretation or teaching." (T. H. Horne.) It should also be ob-

served and remembered, that those prophets were usually *educated* in seminaries instituted for that purpose, that they might thereby be the better qualified for the business of teaching and interpreting the word of God, as well as for their other official duties. These seminaries were called *schools of the prophets*. On this subject, Edwards, in his *History of Redemption*, says as follows:—"And because God intended a constant succession of prophets from Samuel's time, therefore, in his time was begun a school of the prophets; that is, a school of young men, that were trained up under some great prophet, who was their master and teacher in the study of divine things, and the practice of holiness, to fit them for this office, as God should call them to it. Those young men that belonged to these schools, were called *the sons of the prophets*; and oftentimes they are called *prophets*. These, at first, were under the tuition of Samuel. Thus we read of Samuel's being appointed over them, (1 Sam. xix, 20.) The company of prophets that we read of, 1 Sam. x, 5, were the same. Afterwards we read of their being under Elijah. Elisha was one of his sons; but he desired to have a double portion of his spirit, as his successor, as his first-born, as the eldest son was wont to have a double portion of the estate of his father; and therefore the sons of the prophets, when they perceived that the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha, submitted themselves to him, and owned him for their master, as they had done Elijah before him; as you may see, 2 Kings ii, 15. And so, after this, Elisha was their master, or teacher; he had the care and instruction of them; as you may see, 2 Kings iv, 38.—In Elijah and Elisha's time, there were several places where there resided companies of these sons of the prophets; as there was one at Bethel, and another at Jericho, and another at Gilgal, unless that at Gilgal and Jericho were the same; and possibly that which is called *the college*, where the prophetess Huldah resided, was another at Jerusalem. (See 2 Kings xxii, 14.) It is there said of Huldah the prophetess, that *she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college*. They had houses built, where they used to dwell together; and therefore, those at Jericho, being multiplied, and finding their house too little for them, desired leave of

their master and teacher Elisha, that they might go and hew timber to build a bigger, as you may see, 2 Kings vi, 1, 2. At some times, there were numbers of these sons of the prophets in Israel; for when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, it is said, that Obadiah took an hundred of them, and hid them by fifty in a cave. (1 Kings xviii, 4.) These schools of the prophets, being set up by Samuel, and afterwards kept up by such great prophets as Elijah and Elisha, must be of divine appointment; and accordingly we find, that those sons of the prophets were often favored with a degree of inspiration, while they continued under tuition in the schools of the prophets; and God commonly, when he called any prophet to the constant exercise of the prophetic office, and to some extraordinary service, took them out of those schools; though not universally. Hence the prophet Amos, speaking of his being called to the prophetic office, says, that he was one that had not been educated in the schools of the prophets, and was not one of the sons of the prophets. (Amos vii, 14, 15.) But Amos's taking notice of it as remarkable, that he should be called to be a prophet, that had not been educated at the schools of the prophets, shows that it was God's ordinary manner to take his prophets out of these schools; for therein he did but bless his own institution." (See Edwards on Redemption.) It should also be remembered, that under the *christian* economy or dispensation, God hath, in his wisdom, made the same general arrangement in respect to *human* teaching, and for supplying his church with human teachers, (Mat. xxviii, 20: 1 Cor. ix, 14: Eph. iv, 11, 12: 1 Tim. v, 17); and has required that they be qualified for their work, by being themselves properly instructed, (Luke vi, 39: 1 Tim. iii, 6: 2 Tim. ii, 15); and has told them what, among other things, they must do for this purpose, (1 Tim. iv, 13—16.) Now, all this certainly shows the great importance, in God's view, of *human* teaching, or rather of *his* teaching the people his statutes and his truth *by human instrumentality*. It shows, also, that all those men who engage in this business, should be themselves *duly qualified* for their work. He might, doubtless, have taught them in other ways. Nay, he might have so constituted things, that

no mediums of instruction whatever would have been requisite; but all communications which he saw good to make to mankind, whether "for doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness," might have been made directly and immediately from himself. But he has not so done. He has not seen it best so to do. It has seemed good in his sight, not only in general to use means for this purpose, but also to make some of mankind helpers and instruments of good to the others, in this as well as in other respects. Indeed, most men acknowledge this, not only in word, but in deed also. Every theological seminary or school, founded or supported by them, is a practical recognition, on their part, of this truth. So is also their supporting of the gospel-ministry. All these things seem to furnish satisfactory evidence of their conviction, that they cannot understand sufficiently some things which they read in the Bible, except *some man* should guide them, (Acts viii, 31); or, at least, except God should give them such an understanding through *man's* instrumentality. And it may be for the purpose, in part, of impressing still more strongly on the minds of men the importance of good human teaching, and of a well educated ministry, as a means in order to this, that God hath left in his word some things hard to be understood, and which cannot be understood *fully*, without some other help than what the Bible itself, and especially our *English* Bible, affords.

V. Another reason why God hath left in his word things hard to be understood, (and which cannot be fully comprehended in the present world), we may well suppose to be this, viz: that we might thereby be induced *to long after that bright and happy world*, where the darkness will have been past, and the true light will shine in all its effulgence; where the book, now in a measure shut, will be opened, and every one of the seals thereof will be loosed. One most interesting view, in which heaven is represented to us in the holy scriptures, is, that it is a world of *light* and *knowledge*. "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: Now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known." (1 Cor. xiii, 12.) "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light



thereof." (Rev. xxi, 23.) Doubtless the light and knowledge of the heavenly state will far exceed all that it is possible for us to conceive of, in the present world. "Then we shall *know* more than we can now *imagine*. And then we shall apprehend truth in its relations and consequences, not, as at present, by that tedious and fallible process which we call reasoning, but by a single glance of thought, as the sight pierces in an instant through the largest transparent body." (Newton.) Glorified spirits will have a far more enlarged view of God's works of creation and providence, than they had, or could have, in this world. Hence their song will be, "Great and marvellous are thy *works*, Lord God Almighty : Just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints." (Rev. xv, 3.) But, as the work of *redemption* is the most glorious of all the divine works, with which we are acquainted ; so this we must suppose to be the object that will principally occupy their attention. If angels desire to look into these things, (1 Pet. i, 12), much more, we may conclude, will this be the desire of the "redeemed from among men ;" for they will not only be angel-like, (Luke xx, 36, compared with Mat. xxii, 30), but will also feel, in some respects, *a far deeper interest* in these things, than it is possible the angels should feel ; the former, and not the latter, being the *persons* who shall have been in fact redeemed. This work and plan of redemption is indeed now "made known to the sons of men," so far as is necessary for their salvation. But how little a portion of it do we know, or can we know, in this dark world ! Many things relating to it are mysteries still. (1 Tim. iii, 16.) But in the future world, these mysteries will be revealed ; and then those parts of the word of God, which are at present hard to be understood, and all which have a bearing, more or less direct, on the plan and work of redemption, will be fully explained and understood.

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know,  
All I desir'd or wish'd below ;  
And every power find sweet employ,  
In that eternal world of joy."

And it may have been, nay, we may conclude it was, partly, for the purpose of leading his people to long more intensely



for that bright and blessed world, that God hath permitted so many clouds, and so much darkness, to rest upon some parts of his *word*, as well as upon many of his providential dispensations, during the present life.

To the foregoing remarks I would add; how grateful should we be, that there are in the scriptures only *some* things that are hard to be understood! These are, indeed, considerably numerous; as appears, in part, from the preceding pages, and as might be shown still more fully by a more extended specification; for only a part of those scriptural passages, that are attended with some difficulty, is noticed in this work. At the same time, those passages, which are of this description, are but few, *comparatively*, compared with the remainder of the sacred volume. By far the greatest part of the Bible is plain, and easy to be understood, by all those whose "heart is right in the sight of God," if they have only a common share of intellect, and if they will exert their faculties in searching the scriptures, with humble and fervent prayer for divine teaching, and in the use of those means with which a kind Providence has favored them, or has, at least, placed within their reach. It ought, moreover, to be observed, that most of those scriptural passages, that are hard to be understood, are of but little importance to us in a practical view, compared with those which are more plain and obvious. In relation to all the great concerns of christian faith and practice, the holy scriptures are plain, and easy to be understood; so that no one can excuse himself for neglecting them, by the plea, "I am not learned." (Isa. xxix, 12.) It has been remarked above, that in respect to the mere fact of difficulties and incomprehensibles, there is an analogy between the divine word, and the divine providence, or those events which frequently take place under the providential reign of God. It may now be added, that this analogy appears in another respect. In all those things which are necessary for the sustenance, health, and vigor of our bodies, our Creator has provided for us most liberally and abundantly, in the various productions and inexhaustible treasures of the earth. Who can live without water? Behold how freely and abundantly it flows! How indispensable are the productions of the vegetable and min-

eral kingdoms ! And how abundant are they ! How necessary for various purposes is fuel ! And what a vast quantity of it is found in the forests and fields ! In short, how munificently hath He provided for us from this earth, whatsoever is needful for food and raiment, and for our worldly comfort ! And with what facility may a competency of these things be ordinarily attained by us ! As to the luxuries of life, and such things, as, though pleasant to the eye and to the taste, are not necessary for our welfare ; they are more scarce, and of more difficult attainment. Now, somewhat similar to this is the fact, in respect to the holy scriptures. All those instructions which are most needful for us ; “ all things that pertain unto life and godliness,” (2 Pet. i, 3) ; all things that are immediately necessary, for the sustenance, health, and vigor of our souls, in the divine life, are there provided for us in abundance, and may, at the same time, be understood by us without any serious difficulty ; provided, only, our hearts are right, and we are diligent in the use of the appointed means. As to those parts of the Bible, which are of difficult comprehension, and which are few, (compared with the remainder of that blessed book), we may well conclude, that an accurate knowledge of them is by no means essential to our well-being, either here or hereafter. Now, how grateful should we be for this ! At the same time, we should aspire after higher attainments. Those parts of the Bible, which are attended with difficulty, especially to the unlearned, will be found, in many cases, to relate to some of the most sublime and interesting points in revealed religion. They should not, therefore, be despised or neglected, because they may, at first, be hard to be understood ; any more than a higher and more elevated *practical piety* is to be undervalued and despised, because it cannot be attained without difficulty, and because a lower degree of it will render us comfortable and useful, to some extent, in this world, and will insure our eternal salvation in the world to come. We are required to leave the principles (i. e. the first principles, the elements) of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto perfection, (Heb. vi, 1) ; and not to be children in understanding, but in the understanding (of divine things), to be men. (1 Cor. xiv, 20.) If we would grow in

*grace*, we must, for this purpose, grow in *knowledge*. That hungering and thirsting after righteousness, which constitutes at once the character and the blessedness of true Christians, (Mat. v, 6), involves an earnest desire for the increasing *knowledge* of God, and of his word; as well as for increasing *moral conformity* to him. Indeed, the former, when it is of the right kind; when it is not only the knowledge of the true God, but the *true* knowledge of God, includes the latter. There is a knowledge that puffeth up. (1 Cor. viii, 1.) But those, on whom their knowledge produces such an effect, ought to remember, that they really know nothing yet as they ought to know. What if that knowledge of the scriptures, which many have, together with the use they make of it, will only prove the means of aggravating their final condemnation. This need not be the case with us. Though the superficial knowledge of some may inflate them with pride, there is no tendency in *ignorance* to promote true humility, or any other branch of moral goodness. The occasional abuse of a thing is no argument against its excellency, as it is in itself; nor against its great usefulness, when it is used as it ought to be. While, then, we are grateful that most parts of the divine word are so plain and so intelligible, let us remember that there are other most precious treasures in this field, which cannot be found without *digging* for them, seeking them as silver, and searching for them as for hid treasures; but which, when found, will prove an abundant recompense for all the labor spent in their acquisition.



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